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‘For me, when I find the first two chords, it’s like hitting two stones together and creating a spark. If they’re really interesting, they’ll generate the melody and the chords, everything all at once.’

RALPH TOWNER

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Photographer

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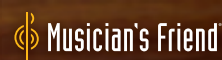
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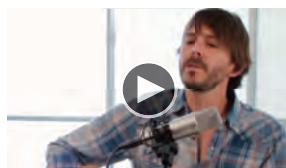

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—“Mr. Tambourine Man,” Bob Dylan

It's the cool touch of butterbean tuners on a misty morning. The sweet scent of freshly sawn spruce, the first waft of varnish on New Guitar Day. The sound of steel strings slapping against a well-worn flattop as the mystery train goes rolling down that lonesome track.

It's falling asleep on the dusty ground in the glow of a summer campfire at Lark Camp while Celtic airs echo in the treetops of the Mendocino National Forest. It's Elvis, the Beatles, the Stones. It's Doc Watson and Dave Van Ronk. It's John Fogerty's “Green River” ringing in your ears (“barefoot girls dancing in the moonlight . . .”). It's the wonder of Kaki King's precise playing, Xavier Rudd's spirit songs, and Eric Bibb's soulful blues.

It's a thousand Djangos serving manouche in a hot club, the crystalline chime of a vintage 12-string, the timeless continuum of folk music, from John Renbourn's medieval guitar works to

the Milk Carton Kids folk-pop. It's the clink of glasses in a darkened Northern California coast café while Peter Rowan and Ramblin' Jack Elliott take you back to some mystic space.

It's Mumford and Sons playing “The Ghost of Tom Joad” on a low-res YouTube video. Tradition passed down from Woody to Bob to Bruce to the Tallest Man on Earth to some guy or gal navigating a cheap pawnshop guitar and building their first callus.

It's the comfort of the front porch, the brotherhood and sisterhood of pickers, pluckers, fingerstylists, and strummers.

The circle unbroken.

It's the many ways to play, create, and grow, to strive and to thrive while embracing a dream machine made of a few pounds of wood and steel. . . .

This is my final issue as editor of *Acoustic Guitar*. It's been an honor to serve you these past three-and-a-half years.

As always, play on . . .

—Greg Cahill

A version of this editor's note appeared in the February 2014 issue.



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SETUP



GUITAR TALK

Soul Sister

Acoustic jazz and blues artist Madeleine Peyroux offers advice on achieving an authentic sound

BY ANDY HUGHES

Madeleine Peyroux's haunting songs—sung in a smoky, sultry voice that embraces the fragility of Billie Holiday—hold concert audiences enthralled with their intimacy and emotion. “I guess that anyone who creates an art form will encounter the greats that have gone before them,” Peyroux says. “It can be intimidating, but it is more inspiring, to me at least, especially if you are doing good work that comes from hearing good work.”

The Associated Press has hailed this Georgia native as “a masterful interpreter of classic songs.”

Peyroux took a break from her tour with Rickie Lee Jones to chat about guitars and more.

Do you use finger picks or plectrums, or are you a fingerstyle player?

I have never felt the need for finger picks or plectrums. I think people who use plectrums tend to do so to strum really quickly, and to ensure that they get plenty of volume from the string vibration.

I have never needed that much volume personally. I am fortunate enough to be part of an

age where anything and everything can be amplified if you want it, and you don't need to work as hard to be heard. I have always moved towards quieter music for the music I make. I really enjoy playing with silence as a partner.

Are you a fan of effects—octave pedals, reverb, and similar?

As little as possible. It's not that I am against effects, there are a few songs in my set where I add tremolo or wah-wah to my acoustic sound, which is fun, and they sound good to me. But for the most part, I don't have a clue how to live in the world of manipulated sound, so I focus on going in the opposite direction. I focus on getting as authentic a sound as possible from my guitar. As long as there is a focus on something in the sound, there is room for art.

What about amplification?

I don't use an amplifier for live performances. I do think that some amplification is interesting, but it's not for me. I use a magnetic soundhole pickup and I carry a pre-amp, both L.R. Baggs, and plug into the main PA system. That means I don't have

to worry about standing still on stage when I am performing because of losing the sound clarity, and it saves me from feedback, which destroys the atmosphere I am building. I can get the closest I can to an authentic acoustic guitar sound without carrying several thousand dollars' worth of studio equipment on stage with me.

Describe your dream custom-built guitar.

That's an interesting idea. I would like it made of mahogany because it's a lightweight wood and it produces a warm and even tone. It's even tempered, if that makes sense. I'd like a small size for the guitar body, like the single-0 range by Martin. That size suits fingerpicking and light rhythm playing, which is what I do, and I think the body size of a guitar really affects the way you play it. You have to feel comfortable. I'd also like a cutaway, so I can play high up the neck, and a super-sturdy thick neck for the guitar that will support superior intonation. I don't know much about the technical side of guitars—I might be constructing a monster before your very eyes!

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The Guitar Summit runs concurrent with the GFA's convention June 19–23



COURTESY OF GUITAR FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Guitar Summer Camp

GFA launches its first Guitar Summit orchestra for kids

BY KAREN PETERSON

Forget (if you can) the interminable “small, small world” soundtrack at Disneyland. This summer, upwards of 30 young guitarists will be creating a wall of acoustic sound on stage at the iconic Anaheim theme park—not as soloists but en masse as members of the **Guitar Foundation of America’s (GFA) first-ever Guitar Summit orchestra.**

“It’s pretty novel,” says GFA education director **Matthew Denman** of the guitar orchestra performance on June 22 and also the summit, which is more like a guitar summer camp in feel and focus. “The kids are really excited,” he says.

The Guitar Summit runs concurrent with the GFA’s convention June 19–23 at California State University, Fullerton, not too far from Disneyland. The summit orchestra is one of three guitar orchestras at the annual convention, joining the GFA Guitar Orchestra, for adults, and the Youth Guitar Orchestra. The summit orchestra is a separate offering, but its players, ages 11 to 18, can also join the Youth

Orchestra on stage during the convention.

“Young people love community. They love to have fun with their peers,” Denman says. “The camp helps provide that atmosphere.” A classical guitarist and director of the **Oklahoma Guitar Orchestra**, Denman teaches guitar at Oklahoma City University and is director of the **Celedonio Romero Guitar Institute** located there. **Chuck Hulihan**, GFA Youth Orchestra director, will conduct the summit orchestra.

Camp offerings include small ensemble workshops, master classes, repertoire classes, and of course socializing. The camp gives young musicians the opportunity to learn from and be mentored by star performers such as **Andrew York**, classical guitarist and composer, and **Gaelle Solal** and **Boris Gaquere** of **Crazy Nails!**

Attendees were selected on a first-come, first-served basis, says Denman, and the size of the Disneyland stage and the number of staff for camp-goers were factors for the 30-musician cutoff. “We might add more

[players] next year,” he adds.

The primary criteria for participants was that they all play standard classical guitar. “We just wanted kids who enjoy this much guitar, who love what we’re offering, and want to be a part of it,” explains Denman.

Conductor Hulihan, who directs the award-winning guitar program at Glendale Community College in Arizona, takes a spirited approach to leading ensembles. As in sports, he says, “Players are all on the same team.”

One can be a lonely number for a guitarist, Hulihan says. “It can be isolating to play by yourself all the time.” Plus, he notes, playing in an orchestra adds to a guitarist’s skill set, from conquering the “challenge of timing to [learning how] to follow the lead of a conductor.”

Hulihan chose the music for the performance, which will include *Fairy Tunes* by Dutch composer and guitarist Annette Kruisbrink. Laughs Denman, “We thought it fit with the Disneyland theme.”

AC



GOOD GOLLY, MISS DOLLY

Dolly Parton fans, rejoice! Thanks to a partnership between the **Southern Folklife Collection** and **Yep Roc Records**, soon you will be able to own a rare, archival recording of Parton's first single, "Puppy Love"—a 45-RPM, with a B-side of "Girl Left Alone." The limited-edition run will be available April 22 in participating stores, and will later be released in CD, vinyl, and digital forms. "Like a first love, a first record for a singer will always be remembered above all others," said Parton, in a statement. "Hopefully I've improved since I recorded 'Puppy Love,' so don't laugh . . . just enjoy." Other rare recordings to be released in the fall and beyond include "Swampland Jewels" (September 22), a compilation of Cajun classics from **Goldbrand Records**; and **Doc Watson's** "Live at the Club 47," originally recorded in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1963.

—Anna Pulley



2017 BLUES HALL OF FAME GUITARIST INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED

At press time, legendary guitarists **Magic Slim** and **Johnny Copeland** were set to be inducted on May 10 into the Blues Hall of Fame, in a ceremony taking place in Memphis, Tennessee. They join four other performers honored this year at the 38th annual ceremony: vocalists **Mavis Staples** and **Latimore**, electric bluesman **Willie Johnson**, and piano man **Henry Gray**.

Slim, a hard-driving Chicago blues guitarist born **Morris Holt** in 1937, was known for his immense repertoire and enormous output (recording more than 30 albums and garnering dozens of Blues Music Awards) until his death in 2013. **Copeland**, hailing from Houston, Texas, established himself in the blues genre with his blazing guitar chops and soulful singing in the late '50s, rising to national prominence with his blues contributions for **Rounder Records** in the 1980s. They will join the more than 125 performers who already are Hall of Fame members.

—A.P.



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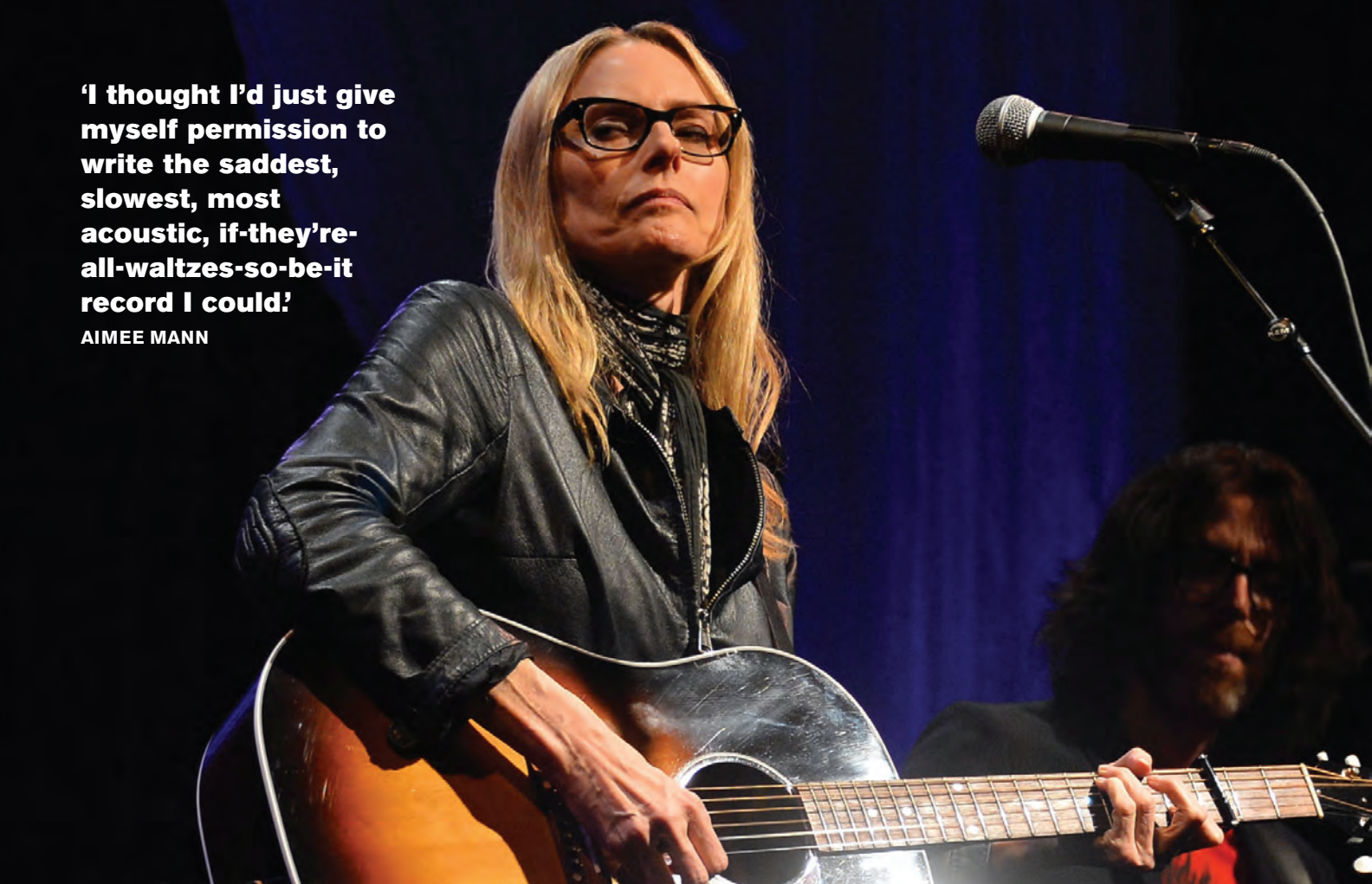
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AIMEE MANN



HOME AGAIN

Aimee Mann returns with the all-acoustic *Mental Illness*

BY KAREN PETERSON

With the release of her first solo album since *Charmer* in 2012, singer, songwriter, and guitarist Aimee Mann is back in her element, not rocking this time, but cozy with the acoustic guitar, writing songs that she says came naturally.

"I saw the songs as acoustic to begin with," says the Grammy winner and Academy Award nominee for Best Original Song ("Save Me" from the film *Magnolia*) about her latest, aptly titled *Mental Illness* (SuperEgo).

With songs like "You Never Loved Me," "Stuck in the Past," and "Lies of Summer," the set fits in nicely with Mann's reputation for a tendency toward melancholy. "I thought I'd just give myself permission to write the saddest, slowest, most acoustic, if-they're-all-waltzes-so-be-it record I could," she notes in the advance publicity for the album. During a phone interview, she elaborates: "I think I've always had a feeling that I ought to be more up tempo. But this time I gave myself the

freedom to do exactly what I wanted to do. I don't really think I am that melancholy, but I do appreciate melancholy as an art form."

Mental Illness follows up Mann's recent collaboration with Ted Leo, the Both, which produced "a real rock record," Mann says of their 2014 self-titled release. After two years of touring, Mann was ready to go home again. "The acoustic guitar is my jam. This is really where I live".

That's almost a literal statement—both the album's sound and its songs are her salute to the acoustic music of the '60s and '70s. "It's the stuff I grew up with," she says, "that resonated with me."

The music she remembers most from her childhood originated with her parents, who were fans of the folk trio Peter, Paul, and Mary. "I really loved those records, the vocals singing in harmony with the acoustic guitar—it really boiled it all down," Mann says of the hit folk group's style, adding that it "forces you to really write the song."

"If you don't have a lot of padding with production elements, then the song has to keep you interested just by virtue of the chord changes and what the lyrics are saying. I appreciated the challenge," says Mann. "I was allowing myself to write the kind of songs that are easiest to write because they come naturally. I just like to hear someone play the guitar and tell me stories."

Inspiration was supplied by listening to music she had enjoyed in the past, in particular Neil Young's *Harvest*. "I listened to that [album] a lot as a kid," she says of the 1972 classic.

Also on her musical radar: Loggins and Messina, and John Denver.

"It always seemed to me that the acoustic-guitar music of that era sounded more intimate, more interesting than modern acoustic guitar. Certain records leave impressions, elements that I always liked, the real simple acoustic-guitar sound. I wanted to go back and figure out why," says Mann. "It's not like I solved that mystery."

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TELLING STORIES

**Jazz guitar great Ralph Towner
returns with a solo acoustic album full
of beauty, light, shadow & color**

BY KENNY BERKOWITZ | PHOTOS BY CATERINA DI PERRI

After graduating from the University of Oregon with a degree in composition, and launching his career as a conservatory-trained, Bill-Evans-inspired jazz pianist, Ralph Towner decided to shift to classical guitar. He moved to Vienna, where he fell in love with Renaissance music, playing pieces originally written for lute. By the time he returned to the States, Towner's new style—third stream jazz influenced by folk and world music—had begun taking shape.

On the new solo acoustic album *My Foolish Heart* (ECM), named after an Evans tune he first heard in 1962, with a nod toward Towner's recent pacemaker, all these strands come together. Some of the pieces, like "Pilgrim," and "Dolomiti Dance," are played on a nylon-string classical guitar and begin with the warm, precise cadence of a lute; some, like "Saunter" and "I'll Sing to You," remain richly pianistic throughout. Switching to a 12-string flattop for "Clarion Call" and "Biding Time," Towner approaches the guitar as a hand-held orchestra, finding an extraordinary range of tones in just 12 strings.

Like the best of his work—whether playing solo; with the Paul Winter Consort, as part of the ensemble Oregon, which he co-founded in 1970 with Paul McCandless; or as a guest guitarist with Weather Report—there's a compositional complexity to the melodies, an immediacy to the improvisations, and a rigorousness that dates back to his foundations in 12-tone music.

At 77, on his first solo album in 11 years, Towner is arguably playing better than ever, and the results are astonishingly beautiful, full of light, shadow, and color.

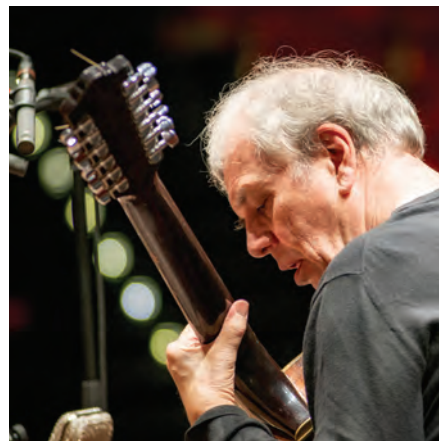
How does *My Foolish Heart* feel different from the solo albums that came before it?

I had written some pieces, which I had planned to record on my Jeff Elliott guitar, which I've played for years. But the Elliott was smashed on a flight back from Brazil—the hard case was not hard enough—and when I reached Rome, the guitar was almost totaled. So most of this album was written on a new guitar, a Jim Redgate, and I ended up recording with the Redgate, which has a very different sound than I usually get.

How do you describe the difference?

It's one of the warmer-sounding Redgates: very quick, very responsive, very clear. A little edgier, really quite powerful to hear when you're playing it. I had to learn what the Redgate was capable of, and it takes some playing to know exactly how loud the notes are going to be. The main goal is to have the control to play all the

notes with the same tone, the same volume. Exactly. So that when I want to bring out one note, I can play the others at the same volume, and for example, bring the third note out a little louder than the others. It's very much like playing a piano, it's that kind of control I'm always looking for, and it took a little while to learn how the Redgate would speak.



'I play the 12-string with classical-guitar technique, adjusted to make the double strings sound as close to unison as possible'

RALPH TOWNER

And the Elliott?

It's been restored, it's sounding wonderful. I think it might have been a little damaged earlier, and it's come back sounding even stronger. It feels familiar, with the same qualities it used to have, so I know exactly what's going to come out of it.

How did the Redgate affect the way you composed these pieces?

Generally, when I'm writing or playing, I'm drawn toward the strength of the instrument. The Redgate drew more of a certain kind of aggression out of the sound than the Elliott would have had, and the sympathetic vibrations are quite loud. Let's say you hit a D on the second string—if the open-D string isn't controlled, it can really ring. So it takes a bit of know-how to keep those sympathetic open strings under control.

Can you talk about how one of the newer pieces was composed?

"The Pilgrim," a simpler one, sounded very

much like a chorale. I liked the modulation of the beginning and when I found that—for me, when I find the first two chords, it's like hitting two stones together and creating a spark. If they're really interesting, they'll generate the melody and the chords, everything all at once. I project the whole piece from those first two chords, and it starts off simply, A-A-B, and modulates in a similar pattern until it winds up with a resolution. It's a very pianistic piece, almost like a Gregorian chant, starting with the sopranos, then the altos, then the basses. Harmonically, it's very dense, and the improvisation is strictly melodic, with single-note lines for the improvis, just going around the jazz form and improvising on the chords.

A piece grows from that initial idea, not just as a collection of sounds, but as a narrative in the language of music. Strange, because it's always a story you're trying to tell, as if you were a writer of literature, but the language is completely non-literal and the meaning is always open to interpretation by the listener. For me, the music itself has points of quietus and points of resolution—it contains all the elements of a written story. It's a language of almost pure emotion without the literal meaning, and how to actually explain it verbally, I can't do it. It's very abstract.

Is that your usual process?

I found "Dolomiti Dance" sitting in my mother-in-law's place while she was arguing with her daughter in the other room. In Palermo. I started it some years ago, found this figure that I liked very much, the first part. I thought it was going to be a canon, so I wrote a harmony part that was very complicated. Basically, the two parts are in a combination of odd meters, and I felt that improvising within those odd meters wasn't really doing the job. It didn't free itself from this carefully sculpted piece itself. So I reverted to improvising in 4/4 time, playing this figure, then repeating the same chord sequence in a different key and working my way through four or five different keys to wind up on the original theme in the original key. It took months for the piece to work itself out.

How does that compare to writing for 12-string?

I play the 12-string with classical-guitar technique, adjusted to make the double strings sound as close to unison as possible—to somehow pull the double strings in a way that sounds percussive, so that the instrument resembles a harpsichord. Again, I play according to what that instrument does well. It's the Guild

[F-312 custom] I've been playing for 40 years, and it was built to my specifications, with a wide classical-style fingerboard, no pickguard, and only dots on the side of the neck at the seventh and 12th frets. It doesn't move well through a lot of fast, repeated chords. It takes a while to generate its sound, and it sounds best when you let it breathe a little bit and you hear all these wild octaves, since it resonates a little bit longer. That's what it does best, it has this wonderful sustain quality to it. I used to experiment a lot with tuning, so the pairs were tuned to different notes rather than playing unisons or octaves.

How would you tune the pairs if not by unison or octaves?

I would tune it to, say, a very complicated minor seventh chord that had almost every note on the scale, but not sequentially. One tuning, I started with a unison on top, because that did a lot of melody. The next two were a third apart from each other. The next one was a major second, the one below that a sixth, and the next pair would be a different interval, maybe a seventh. It would all add up to a big minor-seventh chord with all those intervals sprinkled around.

For me, the 12-string didn't have any real tradition that I was particularly interested in. I liked the way Joni Mitchell used it, but I had to be convinced to play it when I was with Paul Winter in 1970. He owned this 12-string and was just insistent on me playing it, and I really dragged my heels, because 12-strings are murder on the fingernails. Finally, he won out. I would improvise, find a whole pack of strange ways of using it. To me, the 12-string sounds so much like a harpsichord that I would improvise Renaissance pieces, something that felt like up-to-date harpsichord.

Why Renaissance music?

That's what I studied in Vienna with Karl Scheit, the great guitar professor, when I was 22. I hadn't played the guitar at all before that, in any form, and we started right away with Renaissance music, pieces he'd arranged for guitar. The music was already so beautiful that to play it well was a great challenge. And, of course, John Dowland [1563–1626] is really magical—the pieces get a little more difficult as they work their way toward Baroque, but the music is always clear and the harmonies very interesting.

What does Dowland have in common with Bill Evans?

They're similar in the attention to voicing. You

can take Bill Evans's left hand, the way he voiced chords and moved them, almost as if he was arranging for a quartet of singers. All you have to do is take one line, say the soprano part, to see the way it connects with all the others. Literally. They have this logic, and there's a Baroque ideal to the linear way these beautiful harmonies connect, all those chords becoming melodies and sub-melodies under the top melody. That's the connection.

What do you love about improvisation?

People are drawn to improvisation because of what they sense as a personal way to make music. You have to have that attraction to start with, and before I was playing that much, I remember wondering what it would feel like to be in that space. To live in that space, to swim in that space. There are so many ways to improvise, and if you are playing something that has any kind of logic to it, it's going to form its own system, and whatever you're playing either belongs in the story that you're telling or it doesn't. The parts can be very disparate. And although you're inventing something, you're also being swept up by this strange thing that's moving you.

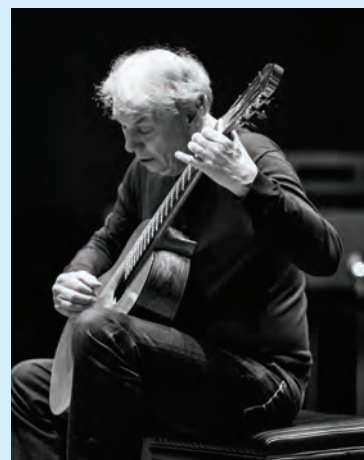
How is your guitar playing changing over the years?

It's getting a little more focused. There's more intent to what I play and when I play—I have a broader view of what I'm playing as I'm playing it, and I think I play with a little more space. I'm able to play with a lot more overview, and the interesting thing about improvised music is that not only are you playing it, you're hearing it. You're part of the audience, and you're hearing everything you're playing and what it means to the piece and how the piece is developing.

You get better at that the older you get. It's a process of being a listener as well as a player, hearing what's actually coming out, and hopefully, you play the instrument well enough that there's enough variety in your sound and in your storytelling, in the qualities you can evoke out of a guitar to draw people toward the music. Audiences are really sensitive to how well you're maintaining your story, and if you start drifting, you can feel the audience not breathing with you anymore. But if you're really playing well, everybody is breathing with you.

There is this incredible sensation of focus on the sound that's coming out and the story that's being told.

AG



WHAT RALPH TOWNER PLAYS

On his latest album, Ralph Towner plays a nylon-string classical guitar made by UK luthier Jim Redgate. Redgate describes the guitar as “a traditional fan-braced cedar soundboard with Honduras rosewood back and sides, cedro neck, and elevated Ebony fingerboard. It has a French-polished finish—a very traditional guitar throughout, though there are a few tweaks under the hood I have developed from my modern guitars. Of note is the large lining where the top is glued to the sides to tune the vibrating part of the soundboard to size. This is an idea I have brought over from my double top and lattice-braced building, which allows the vibrating part of the soundboard to be smaller, lighter, and more flexible while maintaining a balance between the treble and bass response of the instrument.”

In concert, Towner plays a 1995 Elliott/Burton. Cynthia Burton, Jeff Elliott's partner, contributed the spalted-maple rosette and the French polish on it. It has a 65-cm string length, German spruce top, and Brazilian rosewood back and sides.

Towner also performs and records with a 1972 custom-made Guild F-312 with steel strings and a Fishman undersaddle pickup.



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A GYPSY-JAZZ PRIMER

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Gypsy-jazz artist Django Reinhardt still inspires guitarists, hot clubs & festivals worldwide

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Learn the la pompe manouche style in 6 easy steps

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What is it about those Selmer-Maccaferri guitars that makes them so special?

Django Reinhardt and David Rose
in New York, New York, circa 1946



DJANGO UNBOUND

Gypsy-jazz artist Django Reinhardt still inspires guitarists, hot clubs & festivals worldwide

BY PAT MORAN

John Jorgenson thought he'd heard every possible description of Django Reinhardt's guitar style—until he was asked to play the Gypsy-jazz guitarist's music for the 2004 film *Head in the Clouds*. "The British director [John Duigan] said, 'Django Reinhardt makes a particular sort of a racket on guitar. Can you make that same sort of racket?'"

Though Jorgenson chuckles at the memory, "racket" may be as good a word as any when trying to pin down Reinhardt's fierce rhythmic and lyrical playing. Sixty-four years after Reinhardt's death, his music still inspires more than 30 annual Gypsy-jazz festivals worldwide, running from January's *Django Amsterdam* to December's *Pennabilli Django Festival* in Italy. Scores of bands play music in the Gypsy-jazz genre he invented—the website lastfm.com lists over 470 Gypsy-jazz artists, past and present. Many take their name from Reinhardt's iconic combo, the Quintette du Hot Club de France (Quintet of the Hot Club of France), including the Hot Club of Detroit, the Hot Club of Philadelphia, New York City's Hot Club of Cowtown, and even Seattle's Hot Club Sandwich. Musically, each has a regional twist—the Hot Club of Detroit, for example, infuses its swing with horns and hints of Motown soul.

Paul Mehling's Hot Club of San Francisco, formed in 1990, is one of the oldest of these Hot Clubs, and one of the best (see Mehling's lesson on page 26). Reinhardt plays "guitar with a human voice," Mehling says. "He moves the listener in ways a singer can."

Mehling is just one of a cadre of guitarists singing the praises of Django. "Django's playing is so fluid and precise," says bluegrass flatpicking champion and bandleader Larry Keel. "He puts together an endless supply of melodic ideas."

"Django plays multiple down-strokes within a lick," Jorgenson says, describing Reinhardt's sweep picking, or Gypsy picking. "He moves across the strings in a rhythmic manner so each note pops out."

Adds rock star Peter Dinklage, who collaborated with Jorgenson on a Reinhardt-style tribute called "Souvenirs De Nos Peres": "Django loved American jazz, particularly bebop. You can hear it when he plays these powerful brass parts on his guitar."

"I thought he was playing notes that weren't even on the guitar!" says Stéphane Wrembel, who was so impressed with Reinhardt's playing that he moved to authentic Gypsy camps in rural France to learn how to play like Django. (See Wrembel's Gypsy jazz original "Windmills" on p. 53).

Dutch-born guitarist Stochelo Rosenberg got a head start on Wrembel by being raised in a Gypsy camp. "The music of Django is a natural part of my existence," Rosenberg says.

Jean "Django" Reinhardt was born in 1910 in a caravan outside the Belgian town of Liberchies to a family of itinerant Romani—known colloquially as Gypsies. He was serenading cabaret patrons on guitar and banjo by age 12. When he was 18, the wooden wagon he shared with his wife caught fire. The right side of his body and his left hand—the one used for fretting—were horribly burned. With full use of only the thumb, middle, and index fingers of his left hand, he invented a new way to play guitar—wide ranging, radical movement on the fretboard coupled with flurries of flat-picked notes.

Moving to Paris in the 1930s, Reinhardt and violinist Stéphane Grappelli formed the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. With their swinging fusion of American jazz, Romani rhythms, and Parisian street singing, the quintet catapulted to worldwide fame with the genre they invented, Gypsy jazz. The group split with the advent of World War II. Grappelli stayed in England, while Reinhardt returned to Nazi-occupied France, where he miraculously avoided being sent to one of the death camps that claimed so many Gypsies.

After the war, Reinhardt realized a lifelong dream of visiting the United States. That trip

cemented Reinhardt's influence on guitar players well beyond the boundaries of jazz. "Chet Atkins drove up from East Tennessee to Chicago to see Django play with Duke Ellington, and to get his autograph," Jorgenson says.

Atkins, who recorded some of Reinhardt's 100 original songs, went on to influence every country guitarist who followed, Jorgenson adds.

From country music, Reinhardt's influence spread to rock 'n' roll, says Frampton, who still plays Django's solos daily, after running the master's recordings through the Amazing Slow Downer app on his phone.

In the late 1940s, Reinhardt briefly reunited and recorded with Grappelli, and began to experiment with electric guitar. In the 1950s, he went into semi-retirement near Samois sur Seine in France, the site since 1968 of one of the longest-running Gypsy-jazz festivals. On a warm day in May 1953, Reinhardt suffered a stroke and died. He was 43.

"Django was the first guitar virtuoso," Mehling says from the stage of the McGlohon Theater in Charlotte, North Carolina. On this unseasonably warm January night, Mehling's Hot Club of San Francisco is transporting the audience to a smoky Parisian nightclub from a bygone era.

Vocalist Isabelle Fontaine sets the scene. "It's 1941," she says. "Django and the quintet play a song no one has ever heard before, a tune Reinhardt wrote for this occasion. After the number is done, silence fills the room. It is followed by thunderous applause. The audience demands that the band play the song again. Then they demand it a third time. Each time, the reception grows louder, and more enthusiastic."

The Hot Club of San Francisco then launches into "Nuages (Clouds)." Reinhardt's best-known composition, after World War II the tune became a nostalgic and bittersweet paean to hope across France, an anthem for an occupied people.



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"Our band's identity is based on WWDD?—What would Django do?" Mehling says prior to the Charlotte concert. "What would he be playing now if he hadn't passed on in 1953?"

Amid the flurry of interest in Reinhardt, the blossoming of Gypsy-jazz bands, and a host of Django festivals, Mehling sounds a word of caution. He's not certain Reinhardt would be honored by the present state of Gypsy jazz. He recounts an incident in 2000 when the Hot Club of San Francisco headlined at a Django fest in Samois sur Seine. Each act played ever louder, ever faster, an approach that gives Reinhardt's repertoire short shrift, Mehling says.

"There is far too much imitation, and not enough originality" in the scene, and at the festivals, Mehling adds. When players attempt to replicate solos note for note, he says, the result is antithetical to Reinhardt, who was more about improvisation and experimentation.

Speaking with the authority of a Gypsy upbringing, Rosenberg concurs. "My music school was and is the [Gypsy] camp, where I was challenged to create a sound of my own," he says. "I do not want to just repeat. Rather, I express my own soul in the music, and give it my own twist."

Guitarist Thor Jensen, who plays in Stephane Wrembel's band, understands the critique that

festivals may stress imitation over innovation, but he's not sure the charge is fair. "The same could be said about rock 'n' roll, folk, or country," Jensen says. "And just like all of these genres, if you look a little deeper, the uniqueness of the artists becomes more apparent."

Adds Jorgenson, "Anybody who is first getting into this style need someone to emulate, so why not Django? That's how musicians find their voice. The players who develop end up finding their own voice and sound within the genre. When the American scene started in the early part of this century, it was not all that unique and it was not as good as the Europeans."

But now, Gypsy-jazz festivals are fertile ground for innovative and surprising musicians, Jorgenson says. He cites last year's DjangoFest Northwest in Washington State, where he saw his former rhythm guitarist Gonzalo Bergara play. "(Bergara) is Argentinean," he says, "so he brings that Latin influence to the table. But he's still playing Gypsy jazz."

As well as attending and headlining festivals, Stephane Wrembel also has hosted one. In March, his Django a Gogo Music Festival celebrated its tenth anniversary with a first-ever Carnegie Hall date

'I can't name another musician who generates this kind of following. That's the power of Django's music!'

STEPHANE WREMBEL

boasting a lineup of Wrembel, Rosenberg, and Al Di Meola. The event was part of a six-day festival that included master classes and concerts featuring Keel, Jensen, and others.

Wrembel views Reinhardt's legacy with optimism, and the imitation vs. innovation debate with equanimity. "I can't name another musician who generates this kind of following," Wrembel says, citing the worldwide proliferation of hot clubs and Django fests all over the world, as well as booming sales for Selmer-Maccaferri guitars, Reinhardt's guitar of choice. "That's the power of Django's music."

"The guardians keep the music authentic," he adds, "and many people, including myself, are exploring new avenues. I am not too fond of the fight between innovators and guardians. There is space, and a function for everyone. The guardians keep a tradition available, the innovators keep it fresh."

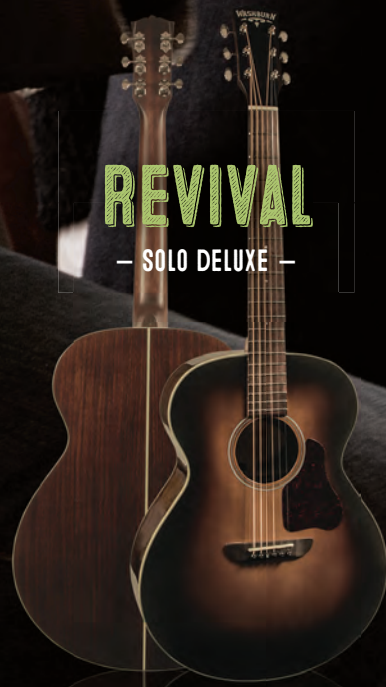
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Hot Club of San Francisco
guitarist Paul Mehling shares his
secrets to finding the essence of
Gypsy-jazz rhythm.



BY PAUL MEHLING

You're new to Gypsy jazz and want to avoid the pitfalls common in learning this style.

Systematically learn the rudiments, which will create a solid foundation for playing Gypsy jazz while benefitting your musicianship in general.

The essence of Gypsy-jazz rhythm—*la pompe manouche* as it's known—is a sparse and swinging canvas of sound. Well-meaning players often misunderstand the basic rhythm of *la pompe* (which translates as “the pump”) and whack the second and fourth beats way too hard because they think that they hear it that way. Careful observation will show that this is not correct: The rhythm actually feels lopsided when you do this, like a person walking down the street with a rock in one shoe.

Try a basic four-to-the bar pattern on a Gm6 chord as shown in **Ex. 1**, using all downstrokes. Then, in **Ex. 2**, shorten beats 2 and 4 by releasing pressure on your fretting fingers.

La pompe is typically played with decorative string rakes that add vibrancy to accompaniments. Beginners sometimes play these embellishments inaccurately in the rush to learn them. The best way to avoid this problem is to work slowly, through a series of graduated patterns.

Start with **Ex. 3** at 80 b.p.m. As indicated by the squiggly line with the downward arrow, drag your pick from the highest string to the lowest, quickly and evenly, so that you can hear each individual note. Play this ten times accurately and then bump up the speed on your metronome. The goal is to play Ex. 3—and the rest of these figures—cleanly at 180 b.p.m.

of it as a sneeze: You have a slow windup and then an extremely fast finish.

Ex. 5 builds on Exs. 2 and 4 by adding a chop (strong chord) where the rests were.

Remember to not hit the chop too hard—it's already accented because it's shorter than the beat before it. If you find that the work from Ex. 4 gets lost when you add the chops, revisit it, starting at 80 b.p.m. and playing ten *ahhhhhCHOOs* in a row perfectly. Remember to speed the metronome up a small amount and repeat until you hit that 180 b.p.m. This may be difficult, but it's definitely doable with practice.

5 In order to play fast and loud—typical traits of Gypsy-jazz playing—you need to cultivate a relaxed body and mind. Novice Gypsy-jazz players tend to play with too much tension in both hands, and this is a mistake. You should have a relaxed grip and a super loose picking-hand wrist—imagine washing your hands and shaking off the water afterwards. Use this same motion whether you're strumming all six strings or picking just one, and you'll break fewer strings, while improving your tone, speed, and volume.

AcousticGuitar.com 29

As for your fretting hand, don't squeeze the neck of the guitar. Learning new chords all the time—and how to switch between them quickly and smoothly—will also help get your hand relaxed. Keep these tips in mind when you play **Exs. 6a** and **6b**. Note that each pair of chords (G6/G7 and Gm7/Gm6) has two fingers in common, so keeping these digits in place will help you efficiently switch between the chords.

4 DEVELOP PICK CONTROL

4 In Gypsy-jazz circles, guitarists with superior technique tell interesting stories, while players with lesser chops speak in baby talk. That's why it's important to develop some serious pick control, which is more than 50 percent of Gypsy jazz, though nobody ever really talks about it.

For help with pick control, work on **Exs. 7 through 9**, which incorporate full chords and single notes for a maximum workout. Throughout, hold down a common Gypsy-jazz chord, G 6/9. (If you can't bar strings 5 and 4 with your third finger, just play the D string open.)

Play all of these examples with alternate strumming and picking. Extend the patterns in **Exs. 8** and **9** all the way up to the first string, and back down to the sixth string if you'd like.

5 QUIET DOWN

5 Just as it's important to sometimes play loudly when soloing in Gypsy jazz, it's a critical skill—often neglected among novices—to play quietly when accompanying. This allows the soloist and the rest of the ensemble to

play in a more relaxed and natural way. It might seem obvious, but when accompanying, always make sure that you can clearly hear the soloist and the other ensemble members above your playing.

 LEARN A BOATLOAD OF SONGS

6 Jazz is all about approaching familiar melodies and chord changes in original ways, but rookie players often make the mistake of focusing on licks and chords at the expense of learning tunes. Look at each melody or jazz standard—whether it’s “Minor Blues,” “All of Me,” or “Minor Swing”—not just as a chance to expand your repertoire, but as an opportunity to acquire more technique, as both a guitarist and an improviser. The more tunes you learn, the better a musician you’ll become. **AG**

Ex. 5

Gm6
2x1333

Ex. 6a

G6
2x143x

G7
1x243x

Ex. 6b

Gm7
x2134x 8 fr.

Gm6
x3124x 8 fr.

Ex. 7

G⁶₉
13x244

Ex. 8

G⁶₉
13x244

Ex. 9

G⁶₉
13x244

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In 1967, the Northern California-based luthier Gabriel Souza built this instrument, which may be the first Gypsy-jazz guitar ever made in the U.S.



HOW TO BUY A GYPSY-JAZZ GUITAR

What is it about those Selmer-Maccaferri guitars that makes them so special?

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Last January, visiting the booth of the Eastman Music Co. at the annual winter NAMM trade show in Anaheim, California, I ran into Bob Bakert, whose title at Eastman is Rudder, a reference to the many hats he wears for the company. Though he's been a professional musician and consultant in the music industry for decades, Bakert exhibited enthusiasm for Eastman's latest steel-string guitars and mandolins, with their artfully distressed varnish finishes. But Bakert really lit up when he started telling me about a project in the works: a production-model Gypsy-jazz guitar.

"Before I came out of retirement to work here last October, I noticed an incredible phenomenon in which Gypsy jazz was just going crazy," he said, excitedly. "And I approached Eastman with the idea of creating a high-end Gypsy instrument at a reasonable price. Now we're in the middle of prototyping."

Bakert and his team were finding this to be no small feat. "We're still working on getting the voicing correct," he said, with the slightest hint of exasperation. "It's easy to make a guitar look like a Gypsy instrument, but it's not as easy to get the guitar to have that great big, mid-range-forward, loud tone that's required for an authentic sound."

FRENCH & ITALIAN ORIGINS

In order to understand that big, authentic sound, it's helpful to have a sense of the Gypsy-jazz guitar's history and construction. The instrument was conceived in the early 1930s through a collaboration between the Italian musician and luthier Mario Maccaferri and the French instrument maker Selmer. (Maccaferri later would pioneer the production of plastic archtops and ukuleles.)

The earliest Selmer-Maccaferri guitar was an oddball creature with its large D-shaped soundhole (*grande bouche* or large mouth); wide, floating bridge; fancy tailpiece; gently arched (not carved) French spruce soundboard; and ladder-braced top and back. The Selmer-Maccaferri was the first guitar with a cutaway and a

steel-reinforced neck. Though the instrument is closely associated with guitar legend Django Reinhardt—and Gypsy jazz in general—it was originally intended for the classical guitarist. "The first examples were built with [Maccaferri's] internal resonating chambers to be very present and loud guitars," says Thomas Davy, the owner of djangoguitars.com, with two showrooms in the Los Angeles area, and a virtuoso Gypsy-jazz guitarist himself.

As opposed to fine steel-string or classical guitars, with solid backs and sides, most of the Gypsy-jazz model Selmer-Maccaferri's had laminated Indian rosewood backs and sides—for sonic reasons, and not cost-cutting measures. "The use of laminate was designed to isolate the top," Davy says. "An arched/bent

This type of instrument's optimal setup differs from that of a regular steel-string.

pliage top and laminated back and sides make the sound reflect outward as much as possible, so the attack of the guitar is quite immediate."

Maccaferri only worked with the company for 18 months. After he left, his original design saw various modifications, among them the introduction of a smaller oval soundhole (*petite bouche* or small mouth) and a long scale length of 670mm (26.38 inches). Still, Maccaferri's name is forever associated with the instrument whose defining sound is characteristic of Gypsy jazz.

GOING SHOPPING

One of the first things to consider when buying a Gypsy-jazz guitar is the type of music that you anticipate playing. If you're looking to get into playing straight Gypsy jazz, whether as a hobbyist or a professional musician, it's best to shop for a Selmer or Maccaferri copy. "For an authentic sound, you'll definitely want to look for some of the things that were found on the original guitars," Davy says.

You should look for a solid, arched spruce top; laminated rosewood back and sides; and a walnut neck. The most popular variation is the later-Selmer style, with a 14th-fret neck-to-body junction and longer scale length. This type generally has the most cutting tone and serves well as an all-purpose instrument. On the other hand, the earlier Maccaferri style has a 12th-fret neck junction and a slightly sweeter and more overtone-rich sound, not to mention a shorter scale-length fretboard, 648mm (25.5 inches), which will be more comfortable for some players.

If your aim is to be a great soloist and sound like Django as heard on such early recordings as "My Sweet" or "Sweet Georgia Brown," keep in mind a common misconception: Reinhardt didn't start playing the 14-fret model seen in photos until the late 1930s. "Django was actually using a 12-fret guitar, proving that it's not just a rhythm guitar," Davy says.

Like any other style of guitar, the Gypsy-jazz guitar has seen a range of design variations over the decades. If stylistic rectitude is less of a concern for you, and you want the basic sonic footprint and feel of a Gypsy-jazz guitar, but with other timbral possibilities, don't limit yourself to a Selmer- or Maccaferri-style guitar. Be open to features that aren't necessarily historically correct. "If you're going to be doing stuff other than straight Gypsy jazz—and you want a bit more mid- or high-presence, for example—you might try a guitar with solid back and sides," Davy says.

A CERTAIN LOUDNESS

It's one thing to hear a Gypsy-jazz guitar on a recording, but many musicians, upon playing one for the first time, are surprised and even taken aback by how they sound. "People describe it as nasal- or crunchy-sounding—or just weird," Davy says. "But that's exactly how a Gypsy-jazz guitar should sound. And it's also why it's best to first experience Gypsy-jazz guitars in person."

Another surprise comes in the form of playability: This type of instrument's optimal setup differs from that of a regular steel-string. "The action on a Gypsy-jazz guitar is generally three millimeters above the 12th fret on the low-E string and around 2.8 on the high-E," noticeably higher than on a standard steel-string, Davy explains. "If you set the action too low without enough tension, like many novices do, the guitar will have no projection or power."

While you shouldn't confuse high action with a poor setup, you should know that entry-level Gypsy-jazz guitars often take a bit of work out of the box to ensure the best playability and sound. So if you must order an instrument online, factor the cost of a good setup—generally as much as \$200, Davy says. "Many of these import models require fret dressing, adjustment of the bridge feet to properly contact the top, notching the bridge to ensure proper string spacing, and making sure that the tailpiece insert is fitted to ensure that there is no rattle," he notes.

Something else to consider when auditioning your first Gypsy-jazz guitar: You can't just slap regular medium phosphor-bronze strings

on the instrument. To get the proper sound and tension from a Gypsy-jazz guitar, the best choice is silver-plated copper on a steel core, like Savarez Argentine Gypsy-Jazz Acoustic Guitar Strings. "The standard gauge for these is .010 on the high-E string," Davy says. "They've been used by every famous guitarist in the genre, including Django."

'People describe [the tone] as nasal- or crunchy-sounding—or just weird. But that's exactly how a Gypsy-jazz guitar should sound!'

THOMAS DAVY

Then there's that tiny, but all-important, accessory: the plectrum. Chances are the medium flatpick you use on your steel-string won't quite cut it in terms of tone and volume on a Gypsy-jazz guitar, which is best played with a specialized type of pick, up to 6 mm thick. "You'll really benefit from a Wegen or Django jazz, the handmade picks that most Gypsy-jazz players use," Davy says, adding

that his shop also makes its own plectrums out of Galalith, a synthetic derivative of the milk protein casein and formaldehyde whose sound resembles tortoiseshell.

The bottom line is that when buying your first Gypsy-jazz guitar, it's best to manage your expectations as to how it will sound and feel. In many respects, it's a different instrument than a steel-string flattop—one that will require new techniques and patience to master. "You have to learn to play these guitars," Davy says. "It's an acquired skill that comes with time and experience."

Just as there's a learning curve with buying and taking up the Gypsy-jazz guitar, there's apparently one when it comes to designing and building the instrument from scratch. I checked back with Bob Bakert a month after NAMM. He told me that Eastman's factory in China—with input from luthier Otto D'Ambrosio, who heads the company's custom shop in California—had produced a pair of prototypes that were edging closer to the desired sound. "We could put these guitars into production now and sell them," he says, "But we're waiting until we're able to really get that beautifully loud sound coming out of the instrument."

AC

MINOR BLING

Here are five straightforward Gypsy-jazz guitars starting at under \$500.



Gitane Cigano Series GJ-10 (\$449 street)

This Selmer copy, a 14-fret model with a 26 5/8-inch scale length, will get you in the door to playing Gypsy-jazz guitar.



Altamira M01 (\$899)

Here's an imported Selmer-style guitar with an impressive bark. It's available with an oil-varnish finish, for an antique look, or a standard polyurethane lacquer finish.



Dell Arte Manouche Latcho Drom (\$1,350)

Like the Gitane and the Altamira, this Dell Arte is made in China. But it's set up at the company's US workshop with excellent fretwork and upgraded components, giving it a superior feel and build quality, similar to a European-built guitar.



Geronimo Mateos Jazz B (\$2,200)

One of the leading Spanish luthiers of Selmer-Maccaferri-style guitars, Mateos makes a Selmer copy with a European spruce top and a figured bubinga body for a relatively affordable price.



Dupont Nomade (\$2,200)

The French luthier Maurice Dupont offers a beautiful Selmer-style guitar with a spruce top and sapele back and sides. Its nontraditional bolt-on neck is removable, allowing for easy travel.



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Alicia Keys Chuck Rainey Fleetwood Mac John Hiatt Matt and Kim Ray LaMontagne The Beach Boys
Alison Krauss Cirque du Soleil John Jorgenson Marty Stuart Red Hot Chili Peppers The Black Crowes
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American Idol Clair Brothers Foo Fighters John Mayer Megadeth Rival Sons The Black Keys
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Annihilator Colin James Frank Filippetti Justin Bieber Justin Mckel-Johnson MENEW Robert Plant The Decemberists
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PLAY



Air Guitar

5 strategies for flying with your cherished gear

BY PAULINE FRANCE

The hazards of traveling with a six-string muse on an airplane have been well-documented on social media. Prized guitars have met their demise due to careless handling; others have mysteriously vanished in transit, never to be seen again by their heartbroken owners.

Many guitarists are understandably fearful of traveling with their instruments. But with a little research and planning, you can help ensure that your guitar gets to your destination—and in one piece. I reached out to some seasoned pros—Kevin Eubanks, Janet Robin, and Kiefer Sutherland—for advice on how to do so. Given their insights and horror stories, here are some essential traveling strategies.

1 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The Department of Transportation issued a final rule to implement section 403 of the Federal Aviation Administration Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 in

regard to the carriage of musical instruments as carry-on baggage or checked baggage on commercial passenger flights operated by air carriers (Part 251). That's a mouthful, but basically what it means is that US federal law allows you to carry-on your musical instrument as long as there is room to safely stow in the cabin when you board.

Because some airline personnel might not be familiar with the statute, it may be worthwhile for you to print Part 251, bring it with you, and kindly show it to a crew member in the event of pushback. Also, if your six-string companion is just too valuable to take any risks, you might consider purchasing a seat for it.

2 INVEST IN PROTECTION

Guitarist and singer-songwriter Janet Robin, who's toured internationally with Lindsey Buckingham, Air Supply, Meredith Brooks, and others, spares no expense when it comes to cases. "Bar none, I pay for the best

case that I can get, especially for acoustic guitars because they're so much more fragile," says Robin. "I don't recommend people carrying a gig bag because sometimes they'll take it away from you at the gate because there's no room. And then you have to check your guitar with a gig bag."

For air travel, it's best to spring for a sturdy flight case. Calton, Cedar Creek, Gator, Hoffee, Hiscox, TKL, SKB, and others make industrial-strength or carbon-fiber models ready to take on the toughest of impacts—including the careless dropping that is all too common among baggage handlers.

If buying a new case isn't an option, take some steps to bolster your regular hardshell case, such as adding makeshift padding in hollow areas. You can be efficient and use clothing that you would've packed anyway, especially in areas around the neck and headstock, which tend to be the most vulnerable breaking points.

3 SECURE YOUR CASE

When performing concerts between filming the TV series *Designated Survivor*, actor, producer, director, singer-songwriter, and guitarist Kiefer Sutherland has had to fly with his guitar. On several different flights, he opened his guitar case only to make a shocking discovery. “The last three trips I’ve made, I had to open my case immediately because they’ll take the pickups out. They completely take the entire guitar apart and don’t put it back together. It’s very frustrating when you have 30 minutes to get to sound check and you open your guitar and it’s in pieces,” says Sutherland, who shudders to think about flying with his 1959 Gibson Country Western.

Sometimes it’s just not possible to avoid surrendering your guitar at the airport. But you can potentially minimize the number of hands that touch it. Consider buying a case with a TSA locking latch (or buying a TSA latch kit for your existing case)—one that can only be unlocked by authorized TSA personnel.

4 WHEN TRAVELING ABROAD, CHECK CITES FIRST

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international treaty that aims to prevent species from becoming endangered or extinct because of excessive commercial use. And it affects precious guitar tonewoods. For example, Brazilian rosewood has been protected under CITES for years, and effective Jan. 2, 2017, CITES declared *any* kind of rosewood as protected—and, yes, that includes your Indian rosewood fretboard and peghead overlay.

The last thing you’d want is to have your guitar confiscated, so a little due diligence is a worthwhile investment. Under the newly enacted CITES Appendix II, Dalbergia and Bubinga rosewood annotation, if your instrument has less than 10 kg of those species, you won’t need a CITES permit to travel internationally. If in doubt, read up at cites.org, and research the import/export restrictions of the country you’re traveling to.

And for further piece of mind, get a “guitar passport” by filling out the paperwork at fws.gov/international.

5 LEAVE YOUR PRIZED GUITAR AT HOME

Kevin Eubanks, former longtime music director for *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno, was on Cloud Nine after a successful performance at the Toronto Jazz Festival. But his euphoria didn’t last long after things went awry during a connecting flight.



“I was on my way to the Cleveland Jazz Festival with guitar lovingly in hand,” Eubanks says. “However, when boarding my connection I was told by a surly voice that I had to surrender the guitar. My fears of never seeing my 35-year-old Abe Rivera custom-made guitar came true. It was gone, guitar-napped, held hostage perhaps by a late ’70s retro disco band! An American horror story.”

That horror story could’ve been avoided had Eubanks left his axe at home and used a travel guitar instead. Instruments like Martin’s

diminutive Backpacker will fit under an airplane seat, and any acoustic by Voyage-Air or Journey Instruments has a hinged neck, allowing the guitar to be folded into a bag that will fit into an overhead compartment.

Alternatively, you might consider renting an instrument. Call a local music shop or a service like Studio Instrument Rentals (sir-usa.com) to have a guitar waiting for you at your destination. It might not be the same, but it would sure beat having your six-string companion broken or stolen.


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The F7 chord, the first position in Ex. 3.



Lucky Sevens

Start enriching your music now with seventh chords

BY GRETCHEN MENN

THE PROBLEM

While you're familiar with the basic major and minor triads, any numbers following a chord intimidate you.

THE SOLUTION

Combine your existing knowledge with a little bit of additional theory. Work through a series of exercises to form a foundation for understanding and using seventh chords. Then you won't bat an eye at the harmonies in such songs as Led Zeppelin's "Going to California," Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven," or the Beatles' "Yesterday."

1 START WITH THE CONCEPT

The basic concept for seventh chords is simple enough: any number following a chord

indicates the note that is to be included in the basic triad to form a more colorful harmony. If you see a 7, this means that in addition to the notes of the triad, you'll also include the note a seventh above the root. Or, if you find it easier to count backwards, just go one step down (whole or half, as the case may be) from the root. The most common seventh chord types are dominant, major, minor, half diminished, and diminished. In this introductory lesson, you'll work with the first three types. Here's how they are constructed:

DOMINANT SEVENTH

If you see a seven following a chord with no further qualification, it's a dominant seventh chord—a major triad that includes a minor seventh. It is often simply called a seventh chord

and indicated with a 7 following the root name, for example, F7. To build a dominant seventh chord, take any major triad, and add a minor seventh above the root. An easy way to find the minor seventh is to go down a whole step from the root. So if the root is F, a whole step down is E♭, and that F7 chord is spelled F (root), A (major third), C (fifth), E♭(minor seventh).

MAJOR SEVENTH

A major seventh chord is a major triad that includes the major seventh. An easy way to find the major seventh is to go down a half step from the root of the chord. If the root is F, a half step down is E. An Fmaj7 chord (also written FM7 or FΔ7) is spelled F (root), A (major third), C (fifth), E (major seventh).



Ex. 1

F



Musical notation for Ex. 1, F major. The staff shows the progression of chords. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each chord.

1	5	5	8	8	13
1	6	6	6	10	10
2	5	5	5	10	10
3	3	7	7	10	10

Ex. 2

Fm



Musical notation for Ex. 2, F minor. The staff shows the progression of chords. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each chord.

1	4	4	4	8	8	13
1	1	6	6	6	9	13
1	1	5	5	5	10	13
3	3	3	6	6	10	10

Ex. 3

F



Ex. 4

F7



Ex. 5

F



F7



Ex. 6

F



F7



Ex. 7

F



F7



Musical notation for Ex. 3, Ex. 4, Ex. 5, Ex. 6, and Ex. 7. The staff shows the progression of chords. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each chord.

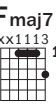
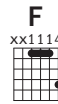
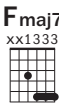
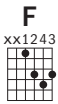
1	1	5	5	8	8	13	11	13	11
1	1	6	5	6	6	10	10	13	13
2	2	5	4	5	8	10	10	14	14
3	1	3	3	7	7	10	10	15	15

Ex. 8

F



Fmaj7



Musical notation for Ex. 8. The staff shows the progression of chords. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each chord.

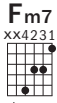
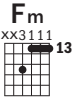
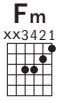
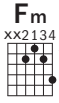
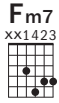
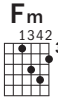
1	1	5	5	8	8	13	12	13	12
1	1	6	5	6	6	10	10	13	13
2	2	5	5	5	9	10	10	14	14
3	2	3	3	7	7	10	10	15	15

Ex. 9

Fm



Fm7



Musical notation for Ex. 9. The staff shows the progression of chords. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each chord.

1	1	4	4	8	8	8	11	13	11
1	1	6	4	6	6	9	9	13	13
1	1	5	4	5	8	10	10	13	13
3	1	3	3	6	6	10	10	15	15

MINOR SEVENTH

To get a minor seventh chord, add the minor seventh to a minor triad. An Fm7 chord (also written F-7) contains the notes F (root), A \flat (minor third), C (fifth), and E \flat (minor seventh).

2 TRANSFORM FAMILIAR TRIAD SHAPES INTO DOMINANT SEVENTHS

Start by reviewing major and minor triads. Ex. 1 takes you through an F-major

chord in various inversions, and Ex. 2 does the same, but with F-minor chords. Remember, a minor triad can be easily built from its major counterpart by simply moving the third down a half step.

It's also easy to transform major triads into dominant seventh chords. The triads here are all four-note voicings, which means one note in each voicing is doubled. So by moving one of the doubled notes to the seventh, you can create a complete seventh chord. In Ex. 3, start with the familiar F

major triad, followed by its associated F7 voicing. This first chord in the series has two Fs, so move the lower of the two—the F on the D string—down a whole step, to E \flat .

For the next inversion (Ex. 4), move the higher of the two Fs, falling on the B string, down to E \flat . If you're unsure why I told you to choose that F, rather than the lower one, try it the other way, and you'll find it's virtually unplayable unless you have enormous hands or are very high on the neck.

In Ex. 5, the fifth (C) is doubled; move the lower C up to E \flat . Then, in both Ex. 6 and Ex. 7, move the upper root (F) down to E \flat . Note: Not all of these grips are playable on non-cutaway guitars. But learn all the voicings regardless, as when you move to other keys, they will fall at different places on the fretboard, rendering them more or less useful.

It won't hurt to memorize these chords for use on the fly. But knowing *how* you built them will help you learn to engineer harmonies all over the neck, and move smoothly between them.

3 REPEAT THE PROCESS, USING MAJOR SEVENTH AND MINOR SEVENTH CHORDS

To create Fmaj7 chords from F triads, you'll do the same thing you did in Exs. 3–7. But, as shown in Ex. 8, move one note in each F chord to E, rather than E \flat , to form its major seventh sibling. Similarly in Ex. 9, you can transform minor triads into minor seventh chords by moving one of the doubled notes in each triad to E \flat .

It won't hurt to memorize these chords for use on the fly. But knowing *how* you built them will help you learn to engineer harmonies all over the neck, and move smoothly between them. Now go make these your seventh chords your own, and write some music with your new vocabulary!

Gretchen Menn is a guitarist and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She writes, records, and performs original music and is a member of the popular Led Zeppelin tribute band Zepparella. gretchenmenn.com

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Shape Sorter

How to use chord grips to generate great soloing ideas

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

When soloing, you want the whole fingerboard to be your playground, so you can go anywhere and find lines and riffs that mesh with the song. But how do you reach that level of comfort and familiarity on the neck, especially when venturing away from the old faithful low frets?

For me, the key is using chord shapes. Solos can be built from scales and modes, too, but for the kind of soloing I like to do, in which the notes change to reflect the song's chord progression,

shapes are the most useful tool. If, say, you're playing over a G chord, and you can visualize a G shape in open position as well as at the third, fifth, seventh, and tenth frets, you've got a big map of possibilities for what and where to play.

Navigating the guitar by shapes is a common strategy—it's the basis of the CAGED system, in which you orient yourself by applying the basic open-chord shapes for C, A, G, E, and D played up the neck. A visual system like this just makes sense on an instrument that's

not linear like a piano and not even symmetrically tuned like a mandolin or violin. In this lesson, you'll see how chord shapes can help

Beginners' Tip #1

To get started, try picking single strings from the chord shapes and holding each note for two beats.



WEEK 1

Ex. 1

Chord diagrams for Ex. 1:

- D**: xx0132
- A**: x01230
- Bm**: x13421
- G**: 210034

Ex. 2

Chord diagrams for Ex. 2:

- D**: xx0132
- A**: x01230
- Bm**: x13421
- G**: 210034

Ex. 3

Chord diagrams for Ex. 3:

- D**: xx0132
- A**: x01230
- Bm**: x13421
- G**: 320004

WEEK 2

Ex. 4

Chord diagrams for Ex. 4:

- D**: x43121
- A**: 321114
- Bm**: x13421
- G**: 134211

you build great-sounding solos—and help you move confidently up and down the neck.

WEEK ONE

First you need something to solo over, and throughout this lesson I'll use the same four-bar progression: D–A–Bm–G. This is a common I–V–vi–IV, as heard in the Beatles' "Let It Be," Jason Mraz's "I'm Yours," Brandi Carlile's "The Story," and Dan Bern's "God Said No." **Ex. 1** shows this progression played in a straightforward rock style. You might record yourself looping this rhythm part for a minute or two, so you can solo over it for the balance of the lesson. (Alternatively, you can play over my **Ex. 1** video on AcousticGuitar.com.)

Now it's soloing time. In **Ex. 2**, the solo phrases just use the top three strings in the D, A, Bm, and G open-chord fingerings. In the chord

barre. The Bm is an open Am shape over a second-fret barre, and the G is an E shape over a third-fret barre. These four chord shapes are the basis of the solo.

As with **Ex. 2**, the solo passage in **Ex. 4** simply arpeggiates the chords. Use the chord diagrams as your guide for fingering. Notice how the same rhythmic figure of 16th and eighth notes repeats in the first three measures. This is the essence of soloing—you create a pattern and spin out variations, in this case applying the pattern to different chords.

Ex. 5 moves further up the neck: the D and A chords are based at the fifth fret, the Bm at the seventh fret, and the G at the fifth fret. This example adds a few notes that are not part of the underlying chord shapes, but they're typical chord embellishments: the high B in measure 1 is the sixth of the D

ninth fret. The example ends with a G triad played up at the tenth fret. This kind of chord-based passage sounds great in a solo mixed in with single-note lines.

Try a different type of double stop in **Ex. 8**. This time, use notes from the chord shape that are separated by one string. These pairs of

Solos don't have to be fast or fancy to be effective!

notes are all a fifth apart, but you don't need to know that—just follow the shape. Notice that in the measure of A, you switch between two shapes, and you do the same with the G—the chord shapes are helping you move up the neck. In the last measure, slide into the final G chord from the tenth fret to the 12th.

Beginners' Tip #2

Don't be bound by the typical fingering for a chord shape. Adjust the fingerings for whatever works best in your solo.

Beginners' Tip #3

If you're a flatpicker, use hybrid picking for the double stops in **Ex. 8**. Play the lower note with the pick and the upper note with your middle finger.

Beginners' Tip #4

Try practicing chord-based soloing without accompaniment. You should be able to hear the progression in the solo by itself.

diagrams above the staff (in this example and in all those that follow), you can see the shapes that the phrases are based on. Even though these diagrams show full chord shapes, you don't have to hold down all the strings—press down only the ones you need in the solo. This example is all arpeggios, played in a repeating syncopated pattern—simple but nice sounding. Solos don't have to be fast or fancy to be effective!

Ex. 3 takes the basic idea of **Ex. 2** a little further, going beyond straight arpeggios to develop a stronger melody. Notice how the phrases transition between chords. As the chord changes from D to A, you move from a D (part of a D chord) to an E note (part of an A chord). With the change from A to Bm, play a C# note over the A chord to a D note over the Bm. And on the change from Bm to G, slide from a B note down to a G on the third string. Just by following the shapes, the solo highlights changes in the harmony.

WEEK TWO

Now, move up the neck. Look at the chord diagrams in **Ex. 4**. If you find it useful, think of these chords in terms of the CAGED system: the D chord is an open C shape over a barre at the second fret, and the A is an open-G shape, also over the second-fret

chord, the F# in measure 2 is the sixth of the A chord, and the A in measure 4 is the second of a G chord. So essentially you're adding in notes around the chord shapes. If you know which notes sound good as embellishments with open-chord shapes, you can use the same additions when you apply those shapes up the neck.

In **Ex. 6**, play another solo line based on chord shapes at the seventh fret. Aside from the hammer-ons and pull-offs, the solo stays close to the shapes. In contrast to scale-derived solos that often move by half or whole steps, notice how the chord shapes help you make bigger and more dramatic melodic leaps. All you do is jump from one string in a shape to another.

WEEK THREE

You can also use shapes in soloing for double stops and chordal riffs. Check out **Ex. 7**, which opens with a little riff built off a D chord at the tenth fret. In the next measure, on the A, get into position at the ninth fret (by the CAGED system, this is an open-C shape) and play a couple of sweet pedal steel-style double stops using hammer-ons. Measure 3 might look complicated until you realize it's just based off of a Dm shape transported up to the

WEEK FOUR

To close out this Weekly Workout, combine ideas from the previous weeks into an eight-bar solo. Start low on the neck on the D, and on the A, use shapes to jump from the second fret to the fifth to the tenth—the shapes show you where your landing points are.

In measure 5, barre the seventh fret with your first finger, as shown in the chord diagram, to play a couple of chordal riffs. Use two A shapes to navigate back down the neck in measure 6, and then outline the Bm in measure 7. Close out the solo with a series of double stops that are simply pieces of the open G chord shape.

This whole approach depends on being able to find chord shapes quickly up the neck. To practice, take any song's chord progression and figure out how to play it—without a capo—at multiple positions. Then try using notes from those chord shapes in a solo. Work on moving smoothly between positions, and search for the notes around the chord shapes that you can add in. The more you do this, the more of a soloing vocabulary you'll develop. And wherever you travel on the neck, you'll find those handy shapes, like little signposts letting you know where you are.



Ex. 5

Chord diagrams for Ex. 5:

- D**: x12341, 5 fr.
- A**: 134211, 5 fr.
- Bm**: 134111, 7 fr.
- G**: xx1243, 5 fr.

Ex. 6

Chord diagrams for Ex. 6:

- D**: 321114, 7 fr.
- A**: xx1243, 7 fr.
- Bm**: 134111, 7 fr.
- G**: x43121, 7 fr.

WEEK 3

Ex. 7

Chord diagrams for Ex. 7:

- D**: 134211, 10 fr.
- A**: x43121, 9 fr.
- Bm**: xx1342, 9 fr.
- G**: x12341, 10 fr.

Ex. 8

Chord diagrams for Ex. 8:

- D**: x43121
- A**: x01110
- A**: 134211, 5 fr.
- Bm**: 134111, 7 fr.
- G**: x43121, 7 fr.
- G**: x12341, 10 fr.

Cont. from p. 45

WEEK 4

Ex. 9

Chord diagrams for Ex. 9:

- D**: xx0132
- D**: x43121
- A**: x01230
- A**: 134211 (5 fr.)
- A**: xx1243 (7 fr.)
- Bm**: xx1342 (9 fr.)
- G**: x43121 (7 fr.)

Chord diagrams for Ex. 9 (continued):

- D**: 321114 (7 fr.)
- A**: 134211 (5 fr.)
- A**: 321114
- Bm**: x13421
- G**: 320004

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In Examples 2 through 9, the chord shapes used are for the most part obvious—you're often outlining or arpeggiating the chords. But shapes can help you stay oriented on the fingerboard even when you're playing something less clearly chord based, like in this example, a single-note melody high up the neck with several string bends. The chord shapes shown map out the key notes—they keep you anchored.

Chord diagrams for the 'Next Level' example:

- D**: xx1342 (12 fr.)
- A**: x12341 (12 fr.)
- Bm**: xx1342 (9 fr.)
- G**: x43121 (7 fr.)

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OLIVIA WISE

How to Play the Blues Like R.L. Burnside

Work out on single-chord grooves like the Mississippi hill-country blues master

BY PETE MADSEN

The late Mississippi Hill Country blues artist R.L. Burnside was relatively unknown until the 1990s, when he signed with Fat Possum Records and began touring both nationwide and in Europe. His sound was heavily influenced by his neighbor, Mississippi Fred McDowell, as well as contemporary blues artists of the day, like Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, and Lightnin' Hopkins. Burnside's raw single-chord-driven and percussive sound was emblematic of the groove-driven Hill-Country players.

If you like your blues with funky drive (think Gary Clark Jr.), listening and learning Burnside's riffs and licks will get your mojo working. Make sure to check out Burnside's playing on YouTube, or on his many recordings,

where you will find some great examples of how he approached the music.

OPEN-G GROOVES

Burnside played many of his tunes in open-G tuning (low to high: D G D G B D) with a funky vibe and percussive attack. Guitarists tend to gravitate toward his version of "Poor Black Mattie"—an infectious, single-chord groove that keeps the foot tapping.

Burnside relied heavily on single-chord grooves, and all of the examples in this lesson explore the possibilities of a single-chord groove in G. **Ex. 1** is inspired by the main groove from "Poor Black Mattie." The key to playing it is to nail the percussive "chucks"—like

a rock drummer's snare hits—on the second and fourth beat of each measure.

Burnside played fingerstyle, using mainly his thumb. To cop his sound in **Ex. 1**, use your thumb to brush the strings while simultaneously palm muting the bass strings—remember, allow your picking-hand palm to rest gently on the strings near the bridge. As for your fretting hand, play the notes on strings 1 and 2 with your first finger.

Ex. 2 is a slight variation on the "Poor Black Mattie" groove, which, after a slide up from the first to the third fret, has your third finger reaching for the fifth fret, G. Both **Exs. 1** and **2** are faster grooves—around 160 b.p.m.—and sound best played that way. It may take some time to nail these examples with the proper

Tuning: D G D G B D
(all examples)

Ex. 1

♩ = 160

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

♩ = 110
3

Ex. 5

Ex. 6

Ex. 7

♩ = 160

Ex. 8

Ex. 9

“Burnside’s Brush”

The image shows a musical score for the song "Bottleneck" by Leadbelly. The score is written for guitar and bass. The guitar part is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The guitar part includes triplets and a "w/ bottleneck" section. The bass part includes a "1/3" section and a "5" section.

The musical score for 'no bottleneck' is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 5, and the second system contains measures 6 through 10. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. The score is divided into two parts, labeled '1' and '2', by a double bar line. The melody features triplets and eighth notes. The bass line includes triplets and eighth notes. The score is labeled 'no bottleneck' in the second system.

[illegible]

15

3

3

0 x x x x 5 3

0 x x x x 5 3

0 3 2 0 3 2 0

0 3 2 0 3 2 0

0 3 2 0 3 2 0

attack, but you should be able to get them grooving with a little practice.

In contrast, **Ex. 3**, similar to “Peach Tree Blues,” is a much slower groove at around 100 b.p.m. This relaxed tempo is an invitation to play a couple more notes—and that’s just what Burnside does. Slide on the second string with your third finger and play the fifth-fret notes with your first finger.

Ex. 4, inspired by “Skinny Woman,” is also a slower groove that emphasizes the bass notes. Burnside, a master of transitions, would often morph a pattern like **Ex. 4** into a riff like **Ex. 3**, before moving into a percussive palm-muted section like **Ex. 5**. On beats 1 through 3 of **Ex. 5**, use a down/down/up strumming pattern—your thumb on the downstrokes and your index finger on the upstrokes—while palm muting.

You can hear a John Lee Hooker influence in **Ex. 6**, which takes its cue from “Jumper on the Line.” Burnside plays a boogie-style groove in his own percussive fashion. Check the notation for proper strum direction—again, use your thumb for the downward strums and your index finger for the upward strums.

Another great slow groove is “Rollin’ and Tumblin’,” which Burnside may have picked up from McDowell. For slide, Burnside placed the bottleneck on his ring finger. The syncopation of the slide phrases in **Ex. 7** is important. The first slide of the double stop on strings 3 and 4 is a little longer than the other slide notes. It gets a full eighth note, as opposed to a triplet eighth, so be sure to elongate the first slide double stop.

In **Ex. 8**, insert the opening phrase from “Rollin’ and Tumblin’”: a double-stop played on the first and second strings, which then transitions to the midrange groove from **Ex. 7**. Keep your slide low and evenly angled over both strings, as it’s easy to misgauge your slide angle and not make good contact with the strings.

NOW PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

In my original composition “Burnside’s Brush” (**Ex. 9**), I borrow some of Burnside’s licks and phrasing, while keeping the groove going strong. I wanted the transitions to sound natural, in keeping with Burnside’s seamlessness.

Start off with the pattern from “Peach Tree Blues,” keeping a slow and even pace. Play the slide notes with your third finger, not the bottleneck. In bar 4, bring in the bottleneck to play a phrase similar to the bass-driven “Skinny Woman” lick, but with a triplet bass/treble/bass snap to punctuate the line. Use your thumb on the sixth string and grab the first and second strings with your middle and ring fingers, respectively.


After repeating the first six bars, climb up the neck a little to create a phrase that can either be interpreted as an extension of the I chord (G) or as a move toward the IV chord (C). It might be a bit of a stretch, but use your third finger to reach up to the eighth fret.

In the next section, starting in bar 13, play a percussive/palm-muted triplet-based phrase that is punctuated by the same slide line from the second section. Then, perform a series of double-stops on the third and fourth strings that are similar to the groove from “Rollin’ and Tumblin’.” Keep your slide tilted inward

to get good contact with strings 3 and 4.

If you’re a fan of R.L. Burnside, then you’re already familiar with his strong rhythmic prowess. His picking-hand dynamics are equally important, and you can learn to copy them through careful listening. But most important, always remember to tap your foot and stay in the groove!

Pete Madsen is a San Francisco Bay Area-based guitarist, author, and educator who specializes in acoustic blues, ragtime, and slide guitar. www.learnbluesguitarnow.com.



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Channeling Django

Stephane Wrembel tips his hat to the legendary guitarist and composer

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Even if you don't know Stephane Wrembel's name, there's a good chance you've heard his music, whether in television commercials or a couple of Woody Allen films, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Midnight in Paris*. Wrembel, a New York guitarist by way of France, is one of the leading modern Gypsy-jazz players. He's known for infusing his work with world music and contemporary classical ideas, but on his latest project, the two-album *The Django Experiment I and II* (Water Is Life Records), he revisits his roots as a relatively straight Gypsy-jazz guitarist.

"Windmills," from the first album, is a

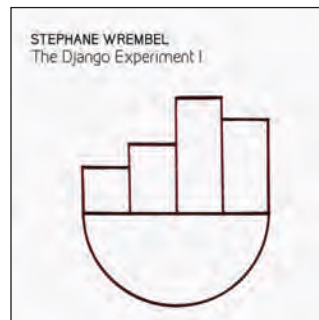
brisk waltz that showcases Wrembel's formidable command of the guitar. It's an athletic outing throughout its three (See music, p. 54) 32-bar sections, the first two in the key of E minor and the third in the relative major, G.

The melody is by turns scalar and harmonic. The phrases in bars 9–16, for instance, are built from the E harmonic minor (E F# G A B C D#) and the ascending E melodic minor (E F# G A B C# D#) scales, while the melody in bars 17–20 implies B7 and B7b9 arpeggios (B D# F# A and B D# F# A C).

Approach "Windmills" just as you would

any new piece—break it down section by section—and phrase by phrase—before putting it all together. Start slowly, and work up to full tempo. The key to doing this successfully is to determine the fingerings and pick strokes that work best for you, and to play them consistently each time.

A little self-reflection is also important. Don't trick yourself into thinking that you're playing the piece cleanly along with the recording, when you haven't put in the time to learn the piece carefully and methodically—as I was admittedly guilty of doing when proofing my transcription.



Stephane Wrembel
The Django Experiment I
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Intro

Em D[#]dim7 Cdim7 B7 Am Am/G F[#]m7^b5 Em

The intro consists of eight measures of chords. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers for the strings (from top to bottom: Treble, A, B):

8 8	7 7	4 4	0 0	1 1	1 1	1 0	0
9 9	5 5	2 4	2 2	2 2	2 2	2 2	0
9 9	7 7	4 4	1 1	2 2	2 2	2 1	2
7	6	3	2	0	3	2	0

A

Em B7 Em B7 Em Am6

The first system of the A section (measures 9-15) includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers:

2 4 2 1 2 4 5	2 4 5 3 4 6	4 5 7 8 5 6 7	2 4 2 1 2 4 5	2 4 5 3 4 6	4 5 7 8 7 6
---------------	-------------	---------------	---------------	-------------	-------------

B7

The second system of the A section (measures 16-22) includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers:

5	7 8 10 10 10	7 7 8 8 8	7 6 7 10 7	8 8 7
7 9 8	7 9 8	8 8 8	8	9 8 7

Em B7 Em B7 Em

The third system of the A section (measures 23-28) includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers:

9 8 10 9 7 9 7	10 7 8	2 4 2 1 2 4 5	2 4 5 3 4 6	4 5 7 8 5 6 7	7 7 5 4 7
----------------	--------	---------------	-------------	---------------	-----------

To Coda 1 ⊕

To Coda 2 ⊕

E Am6 Em

The fourth system of the A section (measures 29-35) includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers:

5	2 4 6 4 5 4 5	5 5 4 5	7	6 7 5 5 8	7 8 7 5 4 7	5 5 5 4 4 5 5
0 4 2						0

* First time only, play G natural.

C7 B7 Em B7 Em

The fifth system of the A section (measures 36-41) includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The guitar tab shows the following fret numbers:

5 5 4 5 3 7	6 2 3 4 5 3	2 5 4 5 4 2	5 4 2 1 4 1	2
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	---

B

41 **B7** **Em** **E7**

47 **Am** **Em** **F#7**

54 **B7** **Em**

60 **E7** **Am**

66 **Am/G** **Em** **C7** **B7** **Em** **D.S. al Coda 1**

Coda 1

73 **F#7** **B7** **Em** **B7** **Em** **G**

79 **E7** **Am** **E7** **Am**

86 **D9** **G6** **F#7**

92 **Bm** **D9** **G** **E7** **Am**

99 **E7** **Am** **C6** **C#dim7** **G**

105 **E7** **Am7** **D9** **G6** **B7** **D.S. al Coda 2**

Coda 2

110 **C7** **B7** **Em**

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Water Music

**Buck Curran's composition 'River unto Sea'
arranged for solo guitar**

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Several years ago, the American guitarist and luthier Buck Curran found himself living in Ireland, in the Wicklow Mountains, looking for beautiful stones in a river and contemplating life. "I thought about how the river flows into the Irish Sea, and how all water and life flows into the cosmos," he says.

This transcendental experience inspired "River unto Sea," from Curran's new recording, *Immortal Light*, his first solo album after a decade of working with the folk duo Arborea. In the studio, the guitarist layered the piece with overdubbed countermelodies on the acoustic guitar, as well as EBow-inflected embellishments on the electric

guitar. But it's just as effective on the solo guitar, as presented in this arrangement.

Curran plays "River unto Sea" in Csus2 tuning, lowering strings 6 and 4 to C, string 5 to G, and string 1 to D, while raising string 2 to C. (See music, p. 60) He uses a capo at the third fret, causing the music to sound a minor third higher than fingered, in the decidedly non-guitaristic key of E \flat minor.

The composition is made up of repeating four- and two-measure phrases that flow smoothly into one another. One of the phrases, seen first in bars 9–12, appears throughout as a transition between new sections. In other words, once you've learned it,

you'll know the bulk of the song.

Work on the piece phrase by phrase—or measure by measure if needed—before putting the whole thing together. Pay careful attention to the timing of the first measure, as it contains the rhythmic backbone of the piece. The music is in 6/8—or six eighth notes per bar counted "1 2 3 4 5 6." In bars 1–3, notes fall squarely on 1, 3, 4, and 6, as well as between 2/3 and 5/6.

Throughout, pick the notes on strings 6–4 with your thumb and those on the higher strings with your index and middle fingers; let all of the notes ring for as long as possible. And go for a gently flowing feel—think about the currents of a river when you're playing the piece.



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Tuning: C G C G C D

Capo III

C_{sus2}

let ring throughout

*Music sounds a minor third higher than written.

C_{m/E_b} **A_{m7}** **C_{sus2}**

F₉ **C_{m/E_b}** **C_{sus2}**

C_m **C_{sus2}** **C_m** **C_{sus2}**

F₉ **C_{m/E_b}** **C_{sus2}**

21 **B \flat /c** **Cm(add9)** **C7sus2** **Cm(add9)** **Csus2**

25 **B \flat /c** **Cm(add9)** **C7sus2** **Cm(add9)** **Csus2**

29 **F9** **Cm/E \flat** **Csus2**

33 **F9** **Cm/E \flat**

37 **Csus2**

41 *To Coda* \oplus F_9 Cm/Eb

45 C_{sus2} *D.S. al Coda (second time)*
(take repeats)

47 C_m \oplus **Coda**

49

53 F_9 Cm/Eb C_{sus2}

57 Cm/Eb $Am7$ C_{sus2} 1 2

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Big Bill Broonzy

Eight Is Enough

'Trouble in Mind' is a classic song built from a shortened blues form

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Trouble in Mind," a song that the jazz pianist Richard M. Jones wrote in the early 1920s, has seen many great interpretations over the years. It's been covered by everyone from such blues musicians as Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Big Bill Broonzy to the outlaw country artists Willie Nelson and Hank Williams, Jr. Great acoustic guitarists—Jorma Kaukonen, Happy Traum, and others—have also put their imprint on the song.

While these readings differ in significant

ways, lyrically, stylistically, and otherwise, what all of them have in common is that they're based on the eight-bar blues structure, rather than the more common 12 bars.

The arrangement here is in the guitar-friendly key of E major. Whether you're a beginner or farther along in your musical development, the song should be no trouble to put together. Begin by making sure you can switch cleanly between the three chords: E, B7, and A7. Then try the simple strumming

pattern as shown in the notation of the eight-bar verse—in other words, everything you need to play the whole piece. The pattern, containing alternating down- and up- strokes, should be easy enough. Be sure to play it with a swing, or lopsided feel. Play each pair of eighth notes not evenly as written, but long-short, at about a 2-to-1 ratio.

If the walk-up and arpeggio in the last two bars happen to give you trouble, just omit them and play the regular strumming pattern instead.



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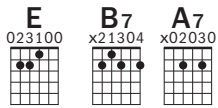
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Verse Progression

Swing (♩ = ♩³)

Chords



Chord progression: E B7 E A7

* ♩ = down; ♩ = up

etc.

Chord progression: E B7 E B7

3

E B7
1. Trouble in mind, I'm blue

E A7
But I won't be always

E
The sun gonna shine

B7 E
In my back door someday

2. I'm all alone at midnight
And my lamp's a burning low
Never had so much trouble
In my life before

3. Trouble in love, done quit me
And it sure do grieve my mind
Some days I feel like living
Sometimes I feel like dying

4. I'm gonna lay my head
On some lonesome railroad line
And let the 2:19 train
Satisfy my mind

5. Trouble in mind, I'm blue
But I won't be always
The sun gonna shine
In my back door someday

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New Gear
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a Revolution

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New Gear
The Seagull
Coastline Momentum

AG TRADE



MAKERS & SHAKERS

Makers meet painters (from left to right): Sergei de Jonge/J.E.H. McDonald; George Gray/Frank Johnston; Jean Larrivée/A.Y. Jackson; Linda Manzer/Lawren Harris; Grit Laskin/F.H. Varley; Dave Wren/Franklin Carmichael; Tony Duggan-Smith/Arthur Lismer

LINDA MANZER, GUITAR (HARRIS) 2015 2016, MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION, PHOTO: DAVID WREN, TD2016.16

The Magnificent Seven

Canadian luthiers celebrate their nation's greatest painters, and their own legacy, with artful guitars

BY PATRICK SULLIVAN

Guitar making's perils don't usually include freezing to death. Yet one recent October afternoon, David Wren found himself in a canoe, seeking inspiration on a remote lake in Northern Ontario.

The search turned out to be a cold one.

"There was nobody up there because it was absolutely frigid," the 65-year-old Toronto luthier recalls. "It was very windy, and if you capsize your canoe at that time of year you don't have long to get a fire going somewhere, somehow."

The trip was field research for a project that Wren describes as far outside his comfort zone: crafting a custom guitar in homage to Franklin Carmichael, one of Canada's most famous painters.

The instrument is part of the "Group of Seven Guitar Project," an exhibit opening in May at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, a sprawling, five-decade-old public gallery in the woods north

of Toronto. Wren and six other top Canadian luthiers spent months building guitars—including one made from birch bark—inspired by Canada's "Group of Seven" painters. Accompanying the show is a documentary film featuring performances on the new instruments by the likes of Bruce Cockburn, Don Ross, and Suzie Vinnick.

Carmichael and other Group of Seven members—Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley—essentially founded Canadian art in the 1920s and '30s with vividly immersive paintings of the country's wilderness. "They would take these long, treacherous journeys and then perch on a rock in the middle of the river and paint," Wren says.

The passion they inspire even today can be seen in Wren's eagerness to locate the remote hill above Grace Lake, where Carmichael once painted. "Paddling by his log cabin and then

actually finding the quartz outcrop where he worked—it's impossible not to be inspired by something like that," Wren says.

The unique exhibit is the brainchild of Toronto luthier Linda Manzer, who conceived of the show while standing in a museum, studying a huge wall full of drawings by the seven artists. "They are preliminary sketches of some of the most famous Canadian paintings ever," Manzer says. "And a light bulb just went off."

Manzer thinks big—she famously designed a 42-string guitar with three necks for jazz-fusion musician Pat Metheny.

She soon began to see parallels between the seven painters and a tight-knit group of luthiers that essentially founded Canadian guitar making in 1970s Toronto. "We were our own little Group of Seven," Manzer recalls with a laugh.

She was one of the first apprentices drawn into the orbit of Jean Larrivée, a bespectacled auto-mechanic-turned-pioneering-guitar-builder.

Wren's photos from that time show Manzer and her fellow apprentices—a crew of grinning, bearded, long-haired, young luthiers—hunched over workbenches covered with clamps and bottles of glue. “We were making the first wave of a very distinctive type of guitar that wasn’t a Martin, wasn’t a Gibson,” Manzer says. “It really was something new.”

Wren—who notes contributions from such luthiers as G.W. Barry and Bruce West, who aren’t in the exhibit—says the new designs departed radically from the dreadnoughts then prevalent. The new guitars had tight waists, as well as clear pickguards from the flamenco tradition. “It was a very Canadian look at that time,” he says. But the group’s innovations spread widely.

Larrivée’s X-bracing system for the soundboard, for example, influenced makers around the world, and his guitars have become internationally famous for their crisp, balanced tone. In a YouTube video with some 35 million views, Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield can be seen strumming David Bowie’s “Space Oddity” aboard the International Space Station on a Larrivée Parlor.

But back in the ’70s, times were tough.

“We had day jobs—we all struggled,” Manzer recalls. “We were able to survive at a time when not many people were buying handmade guitars because we supported each other.”

Technically, they were competitors. “But we made a conscious choice to be friends and help each other,” Manzer says. “And it turned out to be a magical choice. It made us all better builders.”

For the McMichael exhibit, she reached out to Wren and Larrivée, as well as Sergie de Jonge, Tony Duggan-Smith, George Gray, and William “Grit” Laskin, a luthier and musician known for his groundbreaking inlay art. “And everybody wrote back, without hesitation, and said, ‘I’m in,’” Manzer says.

Soon the luthiers were hammering out plans for an exhibit—and the accompanying film documentary—over coffee and donuts at Tim Hortons cake and bake shop. Selling the concept to the art world was tougher. “I thought, ‘Whoa, guitars—that’s not something I’d been used to,’” admits Sarah Stanners, head curator at the McMichael Art Collection. “What captured my enthusiasm was meeting the guitar makers. I realized the love and thought they put into each guitar. Even their process is very similar to the way a painter or another visual artist works.”

And that process produced stunning works of art.

“When you see luthier Grit Laskin’s inlays—my god, they’re just exquisite,” Stanners says. “It just happens that they are on a functional instrument.”

The Group of Seven, Stanners notes, was very focused on landscapes and natural environments. “And so are these luthiers,” she says. “I realized how sensitive they are to what wood species they’re using.”

Sergei de Jonge, for example, paid homage to J.E.H. MacDonald—known for his paintings of Ontario’s rugged Algoma District—by crafting a guitar with birch bark. “He used native materials from areas where MacDonald painted,” Stanners says. “We’re pretty convinced it’s the only birch bark guitar on the planet.”

These were nerve-wracking projects for the luthiers because they were using techniques, design concepts, and materials outside their comfort zone.

“Each one of us pushed the envelope,” Manzer says. “Each one of us did something we’ve never done before.”

‘We were making the first wave of a very distinctive type of guitar that wasn’t a Martin, wasn’t a Gibson. It really was something new!’

LINDA MANZER

Wren, for example, decided Carmichael’s woodcuts would lend themselves to being rendered on a guitar top with woodburning. The only obstacle: The luthier had to learn woodburning, since he’d never done it before.

“The scariest part was walking up to that top to start woodburning after I’d put 150 hours or more into the body,” he recalls. “I was just thinking, ‘I can’t erase this.’ Every line, there’s no going back.”

But he’s satisfied with the result. “It’s totally different than anything I’ve ever done,” Wren says. “I like the look and the fact that I stretched more than I ever had.”

After each luthier made one guitar on their own, all seven collaborated on an eighth instrument—a guitar inspired by Tom Thomson, an artist who influenced the Group of Seven painters before drowning on a canoe trip. “We worked for three days nonstop,” Manzer says. “Besides being incredibly fun, it was inspiring, and we all learned a lot.”

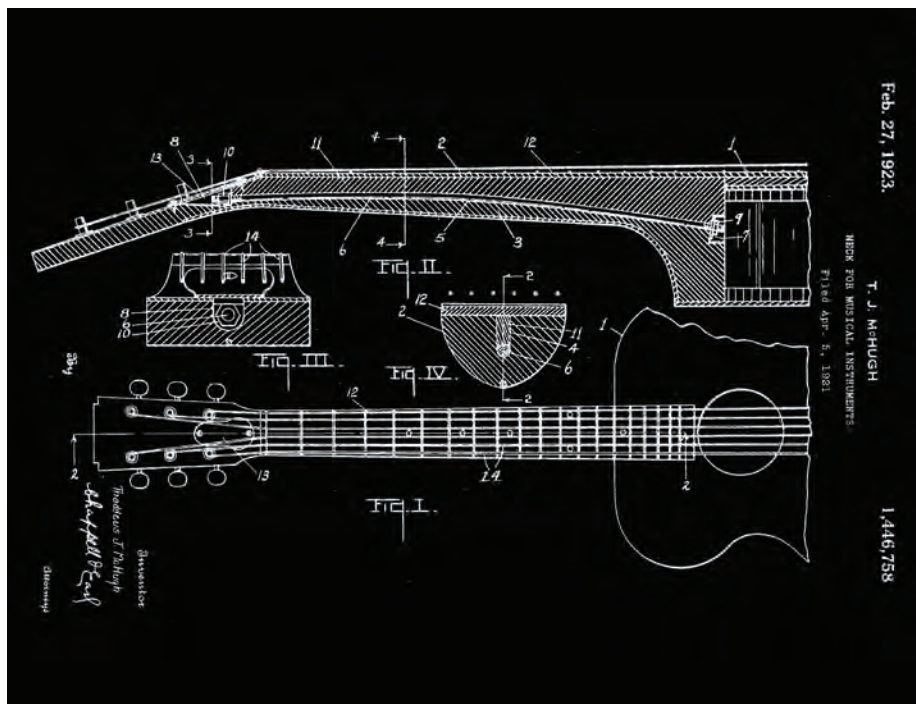
But it was also a chance for reflection.

“We hadn’t really worked together for 40 years, so this was kind of a flashback,” Manzer says. “In some ways our careers are behind us instead of in front of us.”

“But everyone was pleased with what they’ve done—really satisfied with the path they had chosen,” she continues. “For the seven of us, well, it’s been a special, magical journey.” AC



NIGEL DICKSON/COURTESY OF THE MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION



In Rod We Truss

Ever wonder just how this thing works?

BY MAMIE MINCH

I've received a lot of emails asking about truss rods: How do they work? How do I know if mine needs to be adjusted? Can it be used to change my action? Can I do it myself?

Here's how it works: Your truss rod is a long metal rod installed in a channel running most of the length of your guitar's neck. Imagine if you could easily unglue and peel back the fingerboard (oh, but that it were always easy!), just under it, in a contemporary guitar, you would expose a rout filled with a steel rod (sometimes carbon fiber) that is anchored at one end and adjustable from the other. The adjustable side, in the simplest version of a modern truss rod, is threaded and has a washer and a nut on the end. The anchor might be toward the headstock and the adjustable end may be accessed from the inside of the

body—like in a modern Martin guitar—or it could go the other way around, with an anchor nearer to the neck joint and a nut accessible from the peghead, as in a Gibson.

Modern guitars tend to have adjustable truss rods, but the concept of a stronger material being built into a neck to reinforce it is not a modern idea. Old Gibson instruments had a strip of ebony glued into the neck for added strength (and handsomeness, of course). Martin necks have had reinforcements for as long as they've been making steel-string models—only in the 1980s did their rods become adjustable. In contemporary guitars, the widespread use of truss rods to help keep necks straight means that necks can be thinner, lighter, or even made from cheaper material.

Both good and bad.

Over time, string tension wants to pull a neck forward into a bow shape. The truss rod is almost like one big string counteracting that pull, applying just the right amount of tension in the other direction to pull the neck toward straight. It can be adjusted to get you the right amount of relief in the neck. (Relief is a slight bowing in the neck.) Most techs and players like a little relief, as it allows the string to vibrate freely up the neck and makes playing all over the fretboard more comfortable.

The widespread use of truss rods to help keep necks straight means that necks can be thinner, lighter, or even made from cheaper material.

So, is this something you can handle yourself? From where I'm standing behind the bench, I can tell you that it's usually a bad idea. The first mistake people make is in the diagnostic stage: Maybe their playability has changed, the action has gotten higher, and fretting is uncomfortable. This does not automatically mean the truss rod needs to be tightened! The real culprit is often more complicated: Neck angle and saddle height are relevant, too. Also, making the adjustment is not as simple as it seems—there's lots to consider. Over-tightening can cause a real problem—rods can break and anchors stop anchoring and small turns can make a big difference.

Also, it can be easy to choose the wrong tool for the job. And while I've only talked about the simplest version, truss rods come in more than one variety—some are double action, so you could potentially turn it the wrong direction. Truss-rod adjustments also don't work for the full length of the neck—most humps, bumps, and dishes cannot be fixed with the truss rod.

Think about it like this: If something changes in the way your guitar plays, it's time for a setup. That can include adjusting your truss rod, but will likely include other adjustments. And getting a holistic perspective on your guitar is invaluable.

Mamie Minch is the co-owner of Brooklyn Lutherie. She is the former head of repair at Retrofret Guitars and an active blues player.



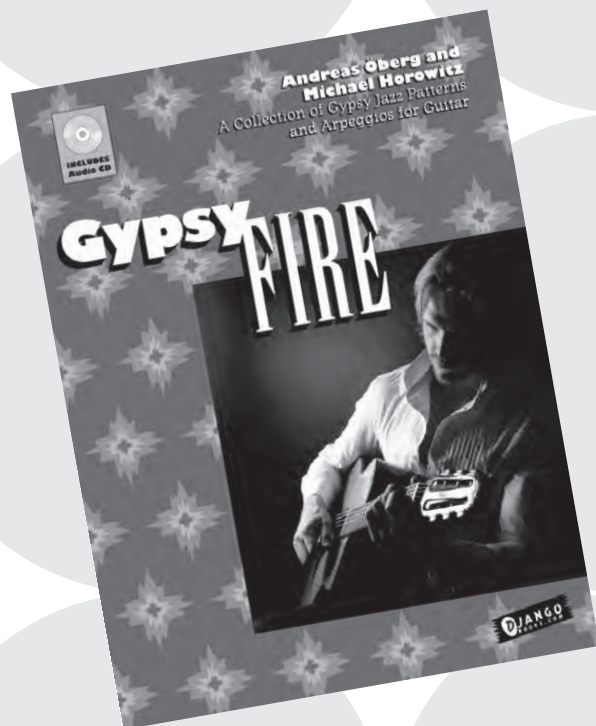
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Sound Cannon

A note-perfect replica of the first Martin dreadnought is a real powerhouse

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Play a Martin D-1 Authentic 1931 and you get a good sense of just how formidable this guitar must have seemed when it was introduced in 1931 as the largest-bodied Martin guitar. Though it weighs just barely over three and a half pounds, the D-1 Authentic 1931 dreadnought feels imposing compared to the smaller guitars I'm accustomed to. And it's got a magnificent voice to match its dimensions: loud and immediate, richly detailed and warm.

The D-1 is one of the latest members of Martin's Authentic lineup, in which the company recreates its prewar designs in highly accurate detail. The series includes a handful of dreadnoughts. What's significant about the D-1 is that it's a replica of the first Martin-branded dreadnought, of which only two were made, which led to the development of the D-18—and the modern dreadnought in general.

THAT UNMISTAKABLE MARTIN SOUND

I don't have an original D-1 at hand for comparison, but the D-1 Authentic 1931 does evoke the familiar sound of a vintage Martin dreadnought. Its robust bass notes are equaled by articulate, singing trebles, and a slightly scooped, warm midrange. Overall, it sounds sweeter than the other dreadnoughts I've recently tried, probably owing to the guitar's 12th-fret neck junction, which has a more central bridge location and a longer soundboard than a 14-fret instrument.

An instrument like the D-1 begs for some

time-honored country picking-hand approaches, like Carter strumming and boom-chuck. The guitar's terrific bass response, paired with the crispness of the upper strings, makes for lively and colorful accompaniment. Flatpicked single-note lines have a bold presence as well, and the notes on the first string are so robust.

The D-1 is a replica of the first Martin-branded dreadnought, of which only two were made.

The D-1 is just as satisfying to fingerpick as it is to play with a plectrum. In standard, open-G, or open-C tuning, it's highly resonant and responsive. The sound is uncluttered, with lightly shimmering overtones that add a beautiful dimension to arpeggio work. Though the dreadnought is not typically the instrument of choice for fingerstyle jazz, the D-1 works brilliantly in this realm, its power and clarity being ideal for complex chord work.

Whatever I try on the D-1, I'm impressed by its smooth playability. I tend to prefer relatively narrow necks, but the guitar's wide nut—1 7/8 inches—feels quite comfortable, as does the medium, V-shaped neck profile. As on other Martin Authentics I've tried, the setup is spot on, with the perfect action, neither too high nor low, and no fret buzzing anywhere on the neck.

INSTANT VINTAGE

In the D-1, Martin has done an excellent job of making a new guitar that looks old but not worn. The Adirondack spruce soundboard—wide-grained at the edges and more tightly grained in the center—has received Martin's Vintage Tone System (VTS). It is torrefied, or roasted, giving it the rich sort of patina that spruce develops over decades—and more important, a sound to match.

The Vintage Gloss finish on both the body and the neck is based on a long-lost recipe from the early 1900s, and unlike a modern finish, the recipe's resultant soft gloss effect lends the subtle luminosity of a well-preserved old guitar. What's more, it feels great.

On its other Authentic series guitars, Martin has replaced the original Brazilian rosewood components with Madagascar rosewood. But on the D-1, Brazilian rosewood, with its unmistakable rich coloring and waxy feel, has been used for the fingerboard, bridge, headplate, and endpiece—a detail that makes this guitar even more appealing. The back and sides are solid mahogany.

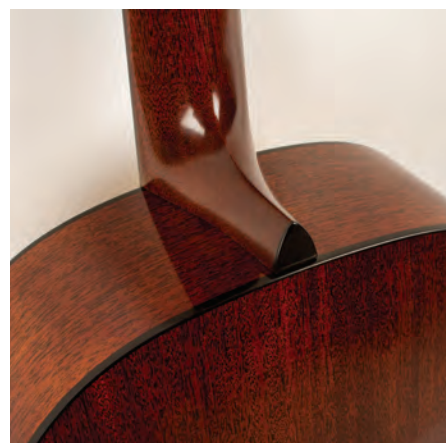
There are plenty of excellent, high-end dreadnoughts available these days, but the D-1 Authentic 1931 stands out among them, as a 12-fret dread is a rarity both in the Martin catalog and in the general market. It scores high marks as a note-perfect replica of the first Martin dreadnought, but historicity aside, it's just a stunningly good guitar. **AC**



The Adirondack spruce soundboard has received Martin's Vintage Tone System (VTS).



The Martin logo is noticeably absent from the headstock, as it was on the originals.



The Vintage Gloss finish on both the body and the neck is based on a long-lost recipe.

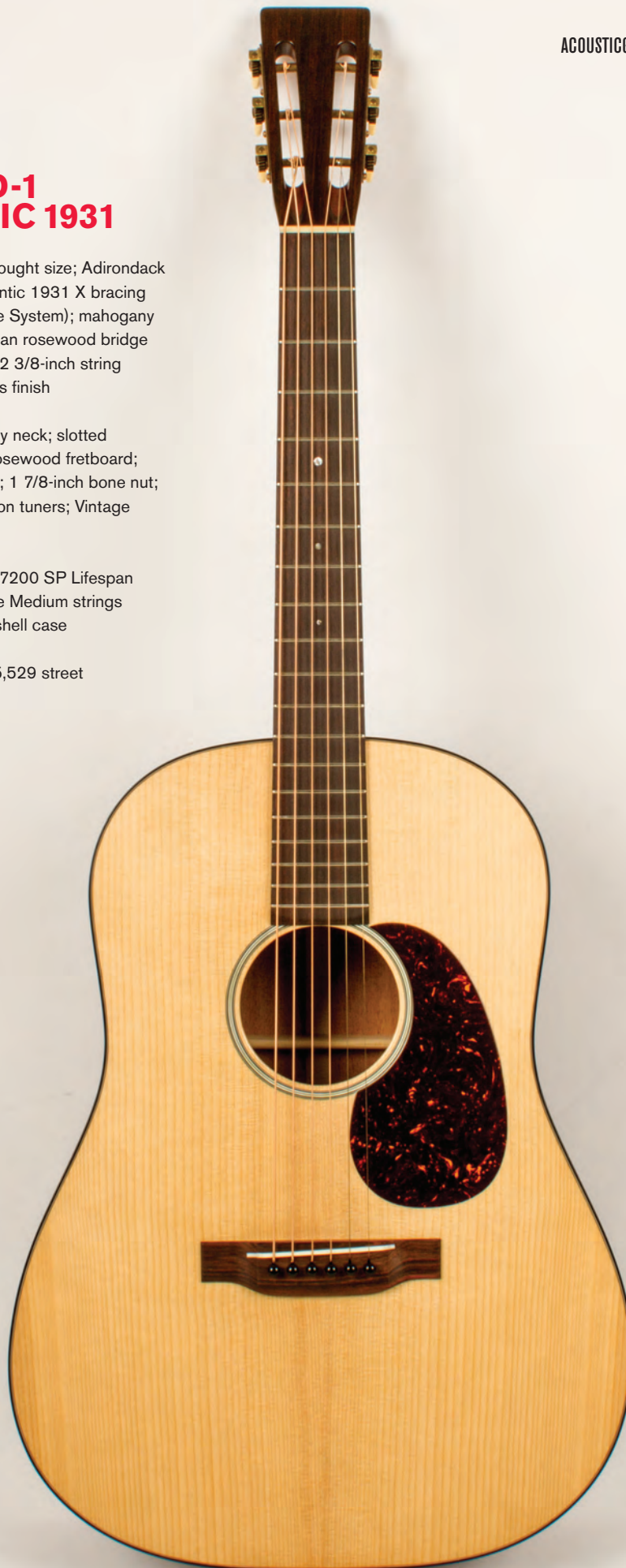
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AUTHENTIC 1931**

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Parlor Beauty

A new Bedell is a feast for the ears and eyes

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

It's deeply gratifying to pick the single open-A string on Bedell's new Revolution Parlor and just sit back and listen to what happens. A rich, cello-like sound, brawnier than expected, emerges from this diminutive guitar. And it hangs in the air for quite a long time with its colorful overtones.

Further exploration of the instrument reveals a similar lushness in all registers and an excellent responsiveness as well. The Revolution's purr is as attractive as its growl, and, while parlor guitars are typically associated with rootsy idioms, the guitar feels like it's up for anything, stylistically speaking.

LUXURIOUS STYLING

Anyone who's played a vintage parlor guitar knows that the playability on these instruments can be hit or miss. A big part of what makes the Revolution Parlor such a satisfying instrument is how smoothly it plays. The guitar's C-shaped, hard-rock maple neck, with perfect low action, feels silky and fast. It's perfect for the high-velocity lines and knotty chord progressions that a guitar with a lesser setup discourages.

Equally comfortable is the Revolution Parlor's body, which is scaled down relative to a larger guitar like an orchestra model or dreadnought, but which has a more substantial lower bout than the typical parlor guitar. The instrument has a relatively lightweight build as well—on a digital postal scale, the review model is around four pounds.

As with the other Bedells I've auditioned, the Revolution Parlor was built with great care and skill. Its gloss-lacquer finish is faultless and its fretwork is unimpeachably good. The guitar's interior surfaces have been treated with similar diligence, free of excess glue and tooling marks.

BROADLY VOICED

The Revolution Parlor has a wide, expressive range. When I fingerpick major-seventh-chord passages gently, the guitar has a warm, dulcet sound, with plenty of rich overtones; when I play country-blues patterns with a more assertive attack, the guitar kind of snarls, in a good way.





Lowering the guitar to DADGAD and then to open-G tuning—which feels great to do, thanks to the Waverly tuners—I like how the guitar maintains its excellent sound and clarity, without a hint of muddiness, in slackened tunings.

The Revolution Parlor responds just as agreeably to a plectrum as it does to finger-picking. When I strum some basic open chords with a Red Bear pick, first gently and then heartily, I'm struck by the guitar's plentiful projection and headroom, likely owing to the Adirondack spruce soundboard. I'm also impressed by the girth and color of single-note lines, particularly on the high-E string, where things often can get brittle.

EYE CANDY

Tom Bedell has always been thoughtful when it comes to sourcing tonewoods. In search of cocobolo—a member of the *dalbergia* family, like all rosewood—he took his team to Costa Rica, where they found stunning billets of this tonewood, only to learn that it had been smuggled from Nicaragua. This unfortunate discovery led the team to Nicaragua, where it finally procured cocobolo from a legally run mill.

That cocobolo is used for the back and sides of all the Revolution series guitars, which includes dreadnought and OM models in addition to the parlor. The wood is denser than any of its rosewood relatives, and so Bedell uses its computer-assisted sound

profiling technology to determine the optimal thicknesses for the woods—as it happens, relatively thin for the cocobolo.

Aside from the complex tone that it lends to the instrument, what's striking about cocobolo is its cosmetic beauty. The set used on the review model is intensely figured and has dramatic sapwood (the living, outermost part of the tree) accents. This eye candy extends to the guitar's ornamental details. A turquoise heel cap complements the bluish hue of the sapwood, and turquoise is also seen as the

central motif of the fretboard position markers.

Hardwood flourishes in the binding, rosette, and purfling lend richness to the guitar, as do ebony tuner buttons. And a full-body sunburst—brownish-red at the edges and vibrant orange in the center—looks autumnal and perfectly executed.

In terms of looks and performance, the Revolution isn't quite like any other parlor guitar on the market. It's a peach of an instrument, worthy of consideration of anyone on the hunt for a great, small-bodied guitar. **AG**

AT A GLANCE

BEDELL REVOLUTION PARLOR

BODY 12-fret parlor size; Adirondack spruce top; cocobolo back and sides; gloss polyurethane finish

NECK Hard-rock maple neck; ebony fretboard; 25.5-inch scale length; 1.69-inch nut; gold Waverly tuners; gloss polyurethane finish

EXTRAS D'Addario EXP16 Coated Phosphor Bronze Light strings (.012–.053); deluxe hardshell case

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High-Flying Bird

Seagull issues an affordable workhorse of a dreadnought

BY GREG CAHILL

There's a beat-up Seagull S6 at AG's office, which shows why that modest axe has a reputation not only as one of the best acoustic guitars you can buy for the price (\$399 street), but also as a guitar that takes a lickin' and keeps on pickin'. Since it was first reviewed in 2006, that particular S6 (solid cedar top and laminated wild cherry back and sides) has been used on numerous occasions around the office as a test guitar: it has had at least three different pickup systems installed (evidence of each still persists) and whenever the magazine publishes a lesson on alternative tunings, invariably the S6, for me, is the go-to guitar to try it out, despite the presence of other big-name guitars that cost ten times as much.

The reason?

It has a sweet, mellow tone that works as well for drop-D blues as it does for C6 slack-key fingerpicking.

So I was intrigued to check out Seagull's latest offering: a Coastline Momentum (\$499 street). This slope-shouldered dreadnought shares several characteristics with the S6—it also has a pressure-tested, solid cedar top and laminated wild cherry back and sides. But it sports Adirondack spruce bracing, a compound-curve top that increases structural integrity, an Indian rosewood fingerboard, a compensated TUSQ saddle, a custom-polished finish, a double-function truss rod, and a set-neck system that resists warping and changes due to climate. The body has white binding on the top

and back and an attractive herringbone rosette.

The construction overall is rock solid, inside and out.

The guitar comes equipped with a Fishman Sonitone preamp and pickup system, which for good reason is becoming ubiquitous in the guitar trade.

The silver leaf maple neck has a somewhat thick profile, but I didn't find it uncomfortable. And the roomy 1.8-inch-wide TUSQ nut lends itself to fingerpicking.

Like the S6, the Coastline Momentum is handcrafted in the small village of La Patrie in eastern Quebec using Canadian tonewoods.

In my hands, it held up to hard strumming on a Who song or two, living up to its billing for projection (the momentum part of its name). But the Seagull really hit its stride plugged into a Henriksen "Bud" combo amp—the Bud, the solid cedar top, and the Fishman Sonitone conspiring to produce a warm, punchy tone as I noodled my way through the jazz standard "Cry Me a River."

Sweet tone, indeed.

For the price, this is an affordable option for the beginner and the performing musician alike.

All in all, like the S6, the Coastline Momentum delivers a lot of bang for your buck.

AG

AT-A-GLANCE

SEAGULL COASTLINE MOMENTUM

BODY Slope-shouldered dreadnought, solid cedar top, laminated wild cherry back and sides, 25.5-inch scale, compensated TUSQ saddle

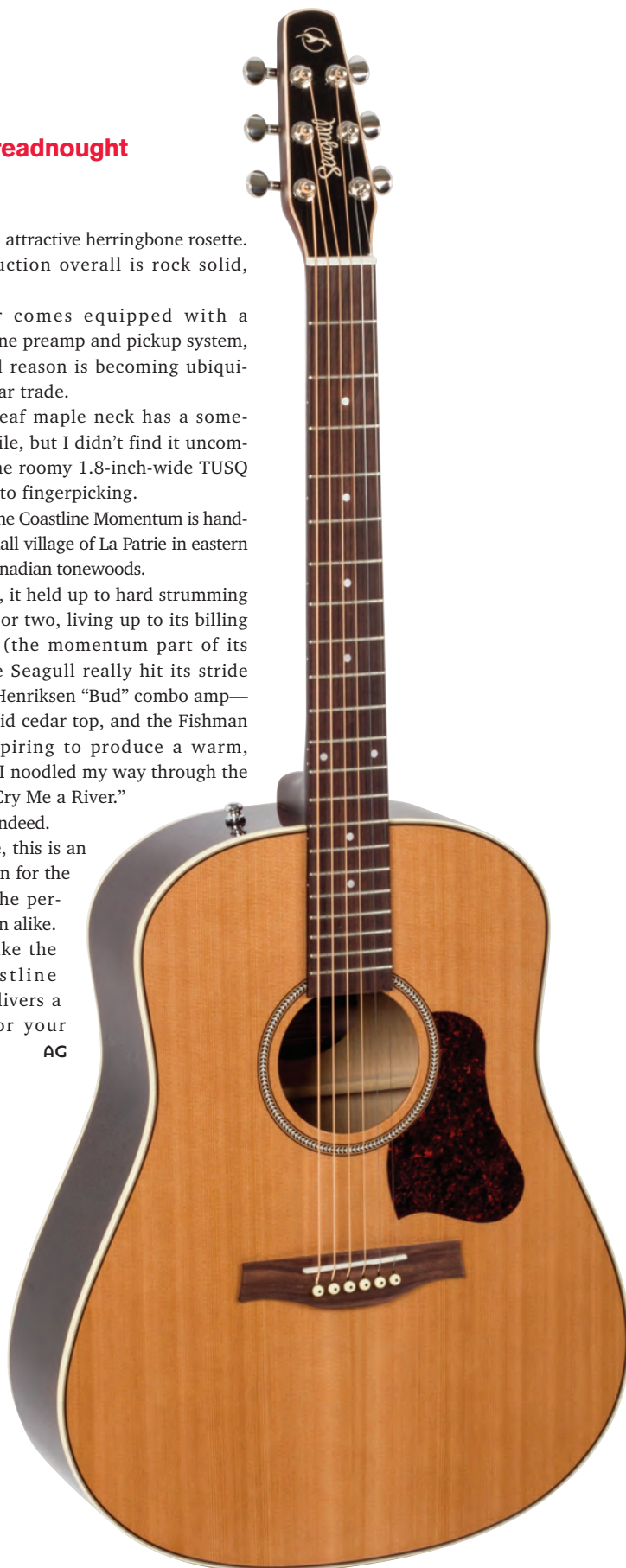
NECK One-piece, silver leaf maple, Indian rosewood fingerboard, 1.8-inch TUSQ nut

EXTRAS Fishman Sonitone electronics

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Playlist
Laurence Juber
covers the Fab Four

78

Playlist
Jason Eady's
intimate snapshots

MIXED MEDIA



Mac Wiseman
I Sang the Song
(Mountain Fever)

COURTESY OF WRINKLED RECORDS

Gold, Not Old

No one put bluegrass legend Mac Wiseman, 91, out to pasture and the music world is richer for it

BY GREG CAHILL

Bluegrass singer and songwriter Mac Wiseman, a 2014 Country Music Hall of Fame inductee, is often overshadowed by his better-known contemporaries Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, and Ralph Stanley, to name a few. But Wiseman, who started his long career as a singer in Flatt and Scruggs' band the Foggy Mountain Boys, is worthy of a heartfelt tribute. At 91, this seasoned vet is still at it. *I Sang the Song: Life of the Voice with a Heart* is a celebration of his considerable contributions to bluegrass and one that unites him with a new crop of bluegrass artists.

The material on this rustic, multigenerational album was written on nine consecutive Sunday sessions by Wiseman and guitarists Thomm Jutz and Peter Cooper (one Sunday for each decade of Wiseman's life). They're joined on the recordings by a studio band of mandolinist Sierra Hull, multi-instrumentalist Justin Moses, and bassist Mark Fain, as well as a celebrity roster that includes Alison Krauss ("Tis Sweet to Be Remembered," the song with which Wiseman started his career), John Prine (the golden-year meditation "I Sang the Song"), Shawn Camp ("Going Back to Bristol," "Manganese Mine"), Jim Lauderdale

("Barefoot Till After the Frost," "Simple Math"), and Andrea Zonn ("Somewhere Bound," "Three Cows and Two Horses"), among others.

Wise contributes vocals on "The Wheat Crop," "The Guitar," and "'Tis Sweet to Be Remembered."

These 11 tracks drip with authenticity, from the driving rhythms to the high-lonesome harmonies. And if you need a reminder that bluegrass is undergoing a revival thanks to a new generation that is embracing traditional music and infusing it with fresh blood, *I Sang the Song* fits the bill.

Bluegrass doesn't get any better than this.

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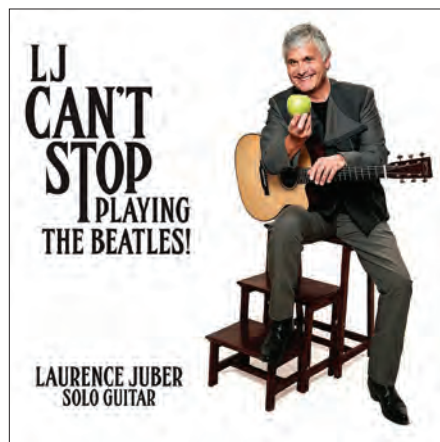
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PLAYLIST



Laurence Juber

LJ Can't Stop Playing the Beatles!
 (Hologram Records)

Former McCartney wingman delivers another sweet fingerstyle Beatles tribute

No post-Tin Pan Alley pop songwriters have written more indelible melodies than Lennon and McCartney. And no instrumentalist—certainly no other acoustic fingerstyle guitarist—has plumbed the depths of said melodies, and explored and extrapolated the internal harmonies of Beatles songs, so deeply and satisfyingly as Laurence Juber. *Can't Stop Playing* is essentially Vol. III of *LJ Plays the Beatles*, an enterprise the Grammy-winning guitarist launched in 2000. (Juber's extensive catalog of more than two-dozen solo albums also includes *One Wing*, released in 2005, about 15 years after his two-year stint as a member of McCartney's Wings.)

The compulsion implied by the title is born out in Juber's forceful chording, which lifts off from deceptively facile-sounding arpeggios and runs, and pushes some of these 14 pieces, such as "Hey Jude" and "If I Needed Someone," into an overdrive mode that approximates the Fab Four's collective vocal and instrumental energy. Few instrumental Beatles covers bear as much repeated listening as Juber's, and this collection, which draws from every period of the band's relatively short career—ranging from "I'll Follow the Sun," "She Loves You," and "If I Needed Someone," through "Day Tripper," "And Your Bird Can Sing," "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "Something," "Honey Pie," and "Don't Let Me Down"—will have you singing along and tracking the gentle tangle of Juber's precise fingerpicking as it explores the soul of each classic song.

—Derk Richardson



Jason Eady

Jason Eady
 (Thirty Tigers)

Sixth studio album offers snapshots of people on the cusp of self-awareness

There's a moment in "Why I Left Atlanta," a classic country "man outrunning his memories" tune on Jason Eady's self-titled album, where the protagonist has a quiet epiphany. Though he regrets leaving a good woman behind, his overriding emotion is relief. He accepts that he'll never be the man he tried to be. Eady's sixth studio album is filled with such instances—snapshots of people on the cusp of self-awareness. Eady augments his lean, carefully framed storytelling with spare acoustic arrangements that unexpectedly blossom with surges of Tammy Roger's whip-lash fiddle, Lloyd Maines' rippling peddle steel guitar, and the swarming harmonies of Eady's wife, Courtney Patton.

Percussive acoustic and razor-wire mandolin propel "Drive," whose narrator realizes that he chose the hard road that grinds him down. Borne on flowing pedal steel and spiraling acoustics, "Not Too Loud" recaps a country-music trope, a father lamenting that his daughter has grown up too fast, and then twists the sentimental scenario. The father has been such a poor parent he can only hope his daughter draws a lesson from his bad example. A woman steps out on her man in the delicately cascading "Where I've Been," but the fault is his because he's cocooned himself against emotion.

The best words "are the hardest to find," Eady's rugged baritone croons in "Waiting to Shine." It's a perfect summation of this incisive, evocative collection. Eady keeps it real by unearthing diamond hard truths. —Pat Moran

GIVE DAD WHAT HE REALLY WANTS THIS FATHER'S DAY



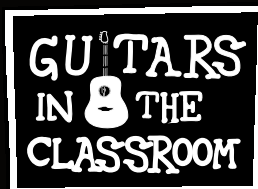
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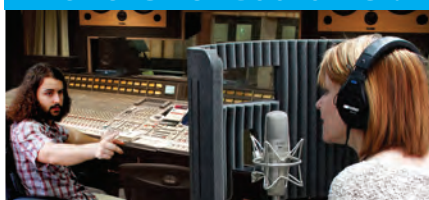
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Sibling Revelry

Twin Gypsy-jazz guitars inspired by beloved family members

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

It's not uncommon for guitarists to name their instruments, but it's rare for a player to commission an instrument inspired by a person. That's what makes this pair of Selmer-style guitars, hand built by the luthier Shelly D. Park, so remarkable.

The guitars belong to Joseph Skibell, a novelist with a weakness for fine custom guitars. (See a profile of Skibell in *AG*'s October 2015

issue.) Skibell had the instruments built in memory of his mother's twin siblings, Les Lezan and Idelle Lezan, and he's dubbed the instruments the Lezanski Twins.

The actual Lezanski twins never married and lived together throughout their adult lives, so they always visited Skibell and his family in tandem. Skibell remembers the siblings as opposites—Les sweet and laid-back, and Idelle

more high-strung. He sees these qualities reflected sonically in the cedar/quilted maple grand bouche ("big mouth"), right, he's named Goldie (after Les) and the spruce/quilted mahogany petite bouche ("small mouth"), left, he calls Emy (after Idelle).

Most important, Skibell considers the pair to be extraordinary instruments: exquisitely built, lightweight and responsive—and a joy to play.



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